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MISS JULIE

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Miss Julie and Other Plays

By AUGUST STRINDBERG

BONI AND LIVERIGHT, INC.

PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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CHARACTERS

Miss Julie, aged twenty-five.
John, a servant, aged thirty.
Christine, a cook, aged thirty-five.

MISS JULIE

The action of the play takes place on Midsummer Night, in the Count's kitchen.

CHRISTINE *stands on the left, by the hearth, and fries something in a pan. She has on a light blouse and a kitchen apron.* JOHN *comes in through the glass door in livery. He holds in his hand a pair of big riding boots with spurs, which he places on the floor at the back, in a visible position.*

John. Miss Julie is mad again to-night—absolutely mad!

Christine. Oh! And so you're here, are you?

John. I accompanied the Count to the station, and when I passed the barn on my way back I went in to have a dance. At that time Miss Julie was dancing with that man Forster. When she noticed me, she made straight for me and asked me to be her partner in the waltz, and from that moment she danced in a way such as I've never seen anything of the kind before. She is simply crazy.

Christine. She's always been that, but never as much as in the last fortnight, since the engagement was broken off.

John. Yes; what an affair that was, to be sure. The man was certainly a fine fellow, even though he didn't have much cash. Well, to be sure, they have so many whims and fancies. [*He sits down at the right by the table.*] In any case, it's strange that the young lady should prefer to stay at home with the servants rather than to accompany her father to her relations', isn't it?

Christine. Yes. The odds are that she feels herself a little embarrassed after the affair with her young man.

John. Maybe; but at any rate he was a good chap. Do you know, Christine, how it came about? I saw the whole show, though I didn't let them see that I noticed anything.

Christine. What! You saw it?

John. Yes, that I did. They were one evening down there in the stable, and the young lady was "training" him, as she called it. What do you think she was doing? She made him jump over the riding whip like a dog which one is teaching to hop. He jumped over twice, and each time he got a cut, but the third time he snatched her riding whip out of her hand, smashed it into smithereens and—cleared out.

Christine. Was that it? No, you can't mean it?

John. Yes, that was how it happened. Can't you give me something nice to eat, now, Christine?

Christine. [*Takes up the pan and puts it before* JOHN.] Well, there's only a little bit of liver, which I've cut off the joint.

John. [*Sniffs the food.*] Ah, very nice, that's my special dish. [*He feels the plate.*] But you might have warmed up the plate.

Christine. Why, you're even more particular than the Count himself, once you get going. [*She draws her fingers caressingly through his hair.*]

John. [*Wickedly.*] Ugh, you mustn't excite me like that, you know jolly well how sensitive I am.

Christine. There, there now, it was only because I love you.

John. [*Eats.* CHRISTINE *gets out a bottle of beer.*] Beer on Midsummer's Night! Not for me, thank you. I can go one better than that myself. [*He opens the sideboard and takes out a bottle of red wine with a yellow label.*] Yellow label, do you see, dear? Just give me a

glass. A wineglass, of course, when a fellow's going to drink neat wine.

Christine. [*Turns again toward the fireplace and puts a small saucepan on.*] God pity the woman who ever gets you for a husband, a growler like you!

John. Oh, don't jaw! You'd be only too pleased if you only got a fellow like me, and I don't think for a minute that you're in any way put out by my being called your best boy. [*Tastes the wine.*] Ah! very nice, very nice. Not quite mellowed enough though, that's the only thing. [*He warms the glass with his hand.*] We bought this at Dijon. It came to four francs the liter, without the glass, and then there was the duty as well. What are you cooking there now? It makes the most infernal stink?

Christine. Oh, that's just some assafœtida, which Miss Julie wants to have for Diana.

John. You ought to express yourself a little more prettily, Christine. Why have you got to get up on a holiday evening and cook for the brute? Is it ill, eh?

Christine. Yes, it is. It slunk out to the dog in the courtyard, and there it played the fool, and the young lady doesn't want to know anything about it, do you see?

John. Yes, in one respect the young lady is too proud, and in another not proud enough. Just like the Countess was when she was alive. She felt most at home in the kitchen, and in the stable, but she would never ride a horse; she'd go about with dirty cuffs, but insisted on having the Count's coronet on the buttons. The young lady, so far now as she is concerned, doesn't take enough trouble about either herself or her person; in a manner of speaking she is not refined. Why, only just now, when she was dancing in the barn, she snatched Forster away from Anna, and asked him to dance with herself. We wouldn't behave like that; but that's what happens when the gentry make themselves cheap. Then they are

cheap, and no mistake about it. But she is real stately! Superb! Whew! What shoulders, what a bust and——

Christine. Ye-e-s; but she makes up a good bit, too. I know what Clara says, who helps her to dress.

John. Oh, Clara! You women are always envious of each other. I've been out with her and seen her ride, and then how she dances!

Christine. I say, John, won't you dance with me when I'm ready?

John. Of course I will.

Christine. Promise me?

John. Promise? If I say I'll do a thing, then I always do it. Anyway, thanks very much for the food, it was damned good. [*He puts the cork back into the bottle. The young lady, at the glass door, speaks to people outside.*] I'll be back in a minute. [*He conceals the bottle of wine in a napkin, and stands up respectfully.*]

Julie. [*Enters and goes to* CHRISTINE *by the fireplace.*] Well, is it ready?

Christine. [*Intimates to her by signs that* JOHN *is present.*]

John. [*Gallantly.*] Do the ladies want to talk secrets?

Julie. [*Strikes him in the face with her handkerchief.*] Is he inquisitive?

John. Ah! what a nice smell of violets.

Julie. [*Coquettishly.*] Impudent person! Is the fellow then an expert in perfumes? [*She goes behind the table.*]

John. [*With gentle affectation.*] Have you ladies then been brewing a magic potion this Midsummer Night? Something so as to be able to read one's fortunes in the stars, so that you get a sight of the future?

Julie. [*Sharply.*] Yes, if he manages to see that, he must have very good eyes. [*To* CHRISTINE.] Pour it into a half bottle and cork it securely. Let the man come

now and dance the schottische with me. John? [*She lets her handkerchief fall on the table.*]

John. [*Hesitating.*] I don't want to be disobliging to anybody, but I promised Christine this dance.

Julie. Oh, well, she can get somebody else. [*She goes to* CHRISTINE.] What do you say, Christine? Won't you lend me John?

Christine. I haven't got any say in the matter. If you are so condescending, Miss, it wouldn't at all do for him to refuse. You just go and be grateful for such an honor.

John. Speaking frankly, and without meaning any offence, do you think it's quite wise, Miss Julie, to dance twice in succession with the same gentleman, particularly as the people here are only too ready to draw all kinds of conclusions?

Julie. [*Explodes.*] What do you mean? What conclusion? What does the man mean?

John. [*Evasively.*] As you won't understand me, Miss, I must express myself more clearly. It doesn't look well to prefer one of your inferiors to others who expect the same exceptional honor.

Julie. Prefer? What idea is the man getting into his head? I am absolutely astonished. I, the mistress of the house, honor my servants' dance with my presence, and if I actually want to dance I want to do it with a man who can steer, so that I haven't got the bore of being laughed at.

John. I await your orders, miss; I am at your service.

Julie. [*Softly.*] Don't talk now of orders; this evening we're simply merry men and women at a revel, and we lay aside all rank. Give me your arm; don't be uneasy, Christine, I'm not going to entice your treasure away from you.

[JOHN *offers her his arm and leads her through the glass door.* CHRISTINE *alone. Faint violin music at some*

distance to schottische time. CHRISTINE *keeps time with the music, clears the table where* JOHN *had been eating, washes the plate at the side-table, dries it and puts it in the cupboard. She then takes off her kitchen apron, takes a small mirror out of the table drawer, puts it opposite the basket of lilacs, lights a taper, heats a hairpin, with which she curls her front hair; then she goes to the glass door and washes, comes back to the table, finds the young lady's handkerchief, which she has forgotten, takes it and smells it; she then pensively spreads it out, stretches it flat and folds it in four.* JOHN *comes back alone through the glass door.*]

John. Yes, she is mad, to dance like that; and everybody stands by the door and grins at her. What do you say about it, Christine?

Christine. Ah, it's just her time, and then she always takes on so strange. But won't you come now and dance with me?

John. You aren't offended with me that I cut your last dance?

Christine. No, not the least bit; you know that well enough, and I know my place besides.

John. [*Puts his hand round her waist.*] You're a sensible girl, Christine, and you'd make an excellent housekeeper.

Julie. [*Comes in through the glass door. She is disagreeably surprised. With forced humor.*] Charming cavalier you are, to be sure, to run away from your partner.

John. On the contrary, Miss Julie, I've been hurrying all I know, as you see, to find the girl I left behind me.

Julie. Do you know, none of the others dance like you do. But why do you go about in livery on a holiday evening? Take it off at once.

John. In that case, miss, I must ask you to leave me for a moment, because my black coat hangs up here. [*He*

goes with a corresponding gesture toward the right.]

Julie. Is he bashful on my account? Just about changing a coat! Is he going into his room and coming back again? So far as I am concerned he can stay here; I'll turn round.

John. By your leave, miss. [*He goes to the left, his arm is visible when he changes his coat.*]

Julie. [*To* CHRISTINE.] I say, Christine, is John your sweetheart, that he's so thick with you?

Christine. [*Going toward the fireplace.*] My sweetheart? Yes, if you like. We call it that.

Julie. Call it?

Christine. Well, you yourself, Miss, had a sweetheart and——

Julie. Yes, we were properly engaged.

Christine. But nothing at all came of it. [*She sits down and gradually goes to sleep.*]

John. [*In a black coat and with a black hat.*]

Julie. Très gentil, Monsieur Jean; très gentil!

John. Vous voulez plaisanter, madame!

Julie. Et vous voulez parler français? And where did you pick that up?

John. In Switzerland, when I was a waiter in one of the best hotels in Lucerne.

Julie. But you look quite like a gentleman in that coat. Charming. [*She sits down on the right, by the table.*]

John. Ah! you're flattering me.

Julie. [*Offended.*] Flatter? You?

John. My natural modesty won't allow me to imagine that you're paying true compliments to a man like me, so I took the liberty of supposing that you're exaggerating or, in a manner of speaking, flattering.

Julie. Where did you learn to string your words together like that? You must have been to the theater a great deal?

John. Quite right. I've been to no end of places.

Julie. But you were born here in this neighborhood.

John. My father was odd man to the State attorney of this parish, and I saw you, Miss, when you were a child, although you didn't notice me.

Julie. Really?

John. Yes, and I remember one incident in particular. Um, yes—I mustn't speak about that.

Julie. Oh, yes—you tell me. What? Just to please me.

John. No, really I can't now. Perhaps some other time.

Julie. Some other time means never. Come, is it then so dangerous to tell me now?

John. It's not dangerous, but it's much best to leave it alone. Just look at her over there. [*He points to* CHRISTINE, *who has gone to sleep in a chair by the fireplace.*]

Julie. She'll make a cheerful wife. Perhaps she snores as well.

John. She doesn't do that—she speaks in her sleep.

Julie. How do you know that she speaks in her sleep?

John. I've heard it. [*Pause—in which they look at each other.*]

Julie. Why don't you sit down?

John. I shouldn't take such a liberty in your presence.

Julie. And if I order you to——

John. Then I obey.

Julie. Sit down; but, wait a moment, can't you give me something to drink?

John. I don't know what's in the refrigerator. I don't think there's anything except beer.

Julie. That's not to be sniffed at. Personally I'm so simple in my tastes that I prefer it to wine.

John. [*Takes a bottle out of the refrigerator and draws the cork; he looks in the cupboard for a glass and*

plate, on which he serves the beer.] May I offer you some?

Julie. Thanks. Won't you have some as well?

John. I'm not what you might call keen on beer, but if you order me, Miss——

Julie. Order? It seems to me that as a courteous cavalier you might keep your partner company.

John. A very sound observation. [*He opens another bottle and takes a glass.*]

Julie. Drink my health! [JOHN *hesitates.*] I believe the old duffer is bashful.

John. [*On his knees, mock heroically, lifts up his glass.*] The health of my mistress!

Julie. Bravo! Now, as a finishing touch, you must kiss my shoe. [JOHN *hesitates, then catches sharply hold of her foot and kisses it lightly.*] First rate! You should have gone on the stage.

John. [*Gets up.*] This kind of thing mustn't go any further, Miss. Anybody might come in and see us.

Julie. What would it matter?

John. People would talk, and make no bones about what they said either, and if you knew, Miss, how their tongues have already been wagging, then——

Julie. What did they say then? Tell me, but sit down.

John. [*Sits down.*] I don't want to hurt you, but you made use of expressions—which pointed to innuendoes of such a kind—yes, you'll understand this perfectly well yourself. You're not a child any more, and, if a lady is seen to drink alone with a man—even if it's only a servant, *tête-à-tête* at night—then——

Julie. What then? And, besides, we're not alone: Christine is here.

John. Yes, asleep.

Julie. Then I'll wake her up. [*She gets up.*] Christine, are you asleep?

Christine. [*In her sleep.*] Bla—bla—bla—bla.

Julie. Christine! The woman can go on sleeping.

Christine. [*In her sleep.*] The Count's boots are already done—put the coffee out—at once, at once, at once—oh, oh—ah!

Julie. [*Takes hold of her by the nose.*] Wake up, will you?

John. [*Harshly.*] You mustn't disturb a person who's asleep.

Julie. [*Sharply.*] What?

John. A person who's been on her legs all day by the fireplace will naturally be tired when night comes; and sleep should be respected.

Julie. [*In another tone.*] That's a pretty thought, and does you credit—thank you. [*She holds her hand out to* JOHN.] Come out now and pick some clover for me. [*During the subsequent dialogue* CHRISTINE *wakes up, and exit in a dazed condition to the right, to go to bed.*]

John. With you, Miss?

Julie. With me?

John. It's impossible, absolutely impossible.

Julie. I don't understand what you mean. Can it be possible that you imagine such a thing for a single minute.

John. Me—no, but the people—yes.

Julie. What! That I should be in love with a servant?

John. I'm not by any means an educated man, but there have been cases, and nothing is sacred to the people.

Julie. I do believe the man is an aristocrat.

John. Yes; that I am.

Julie. And I'm on the down path.

John. Don't go down, Miss. Take my advice, nobody will believe that you went down of your own free will. People will always say you fell.

Julie. I have a better opinion of people than you have. Come and try. Come. [*She challenges him with her eyes.*]

John. You are strange, you know.

Julie. Perhaps I am, but so are you. Besides, everything is strange. Life, men, the whole thing is simply an iceberg which is driven out on the water until it sinks —sinks. I have a dream which comes up now and again, and now it haunts me. I am sitting on the top of a high pillar and can't see any possibility of getting down; I feel dizzy when I look down, but I have to get down all the same. I haven't got the pluck to throw myself off. I can't keep my balance and I want to fall over, but I don't fall. And I don't get a moment's peace until I'm down below. No rest until I've got to the ground, and when I've got down to the ground I want to get right into the earth. Have you ever felt anything like that?

John. No; I usually dream I'm lying under a high tree in a gloomy forest. I want to get up right to the top and look round at the light landscape where the sun shines, and plunder the birds' nests where the golden eggs lie, and I climb and climb, but the trunk is so thick and so smooth, and it's such a long way to the first branch; but I know, if only I can get to the first branch, I can climb to the top, as though it were a ladder. I haven't got there yet, but I must get there, even though it were only in my dreams.

Julie. And here I am now standing chattering to you. Come along now, just out into the park. [*She offers him her arm and they go.*]

John. We must sleep to-night on nine Midsummer Night herbs, then our dreams will come true. [*Both turn round in the doorway.* JOHN *holds his hand before one of his eyes.*]

Julie. Let me see what's got into your eye.

John. Oh, nothing, only a bit of dust—it'll be all right in a minute.

Julie. It was the sleeve of my dress that grazed you. Just sit down and I'll help you get it out. [*She takes him by the arm and makes him sit down on the table. She then takes his head and presses it down, and tries to get the dust out with the corner of her handkerchief.*] Be quite still, quite still! [*She strikes him on the hand.*] There! Will he be obedient now? I do believe the great strong man's trembling. [*She feels his arm.*] With arms like that!

John. [*Warningly.*] Miss Julie

Julie. Yes, Monsieur Jean.

John. Attention! Je ne suis qu'un homme!

Julie. Won't he sit still? See! It's out now! Let him kiss my hand and thank me.

John. [*Stands up.*] Miss Julie, listen to me. Christine has cleared out and gone to bed. Won't you listen to me?

Julie. Kiss my hand first.

John. Listen to me.

Julie. Kiss my hand first.

John. All right, but you must be responsible for the consequences.

Julie. What consequences?

John. What consequences? Don't you know it's dangerous to play with fire?

Julie. Not for me. I am insured!

John. [*Sharply.*] No, you're not! And even if you were there's inflammable material pretty close.

Julie. Do you mean yourself?

John. Yes. Not that I'm particularly dangerous, but I'm just a young man!

Julie. With an excellent appearance—what incredible vanity! Don Juan, I suppose, or a Joseph. I believe, on my honor, the man's a Joseph!

John. Do you believe that?

Julie. I almost fear it. [JOHN *goes brutally toward and tries to embrace her, so as to kiss her.* JULIE *boxes his ears.*] Hands off.

John. Are you serious or joking?

Julie. Serious.

John. In that case, what took place before was also serious. You're taking the game much too seriously, and and that's dangerous. But I'm tired of the game now, so would you please excuse me so that I can go back to my work? [*He goes to the back of the stage, to the boots.*] The Count must have his boots early, and midnight is long past. [*He takes up the boots.*]

Julie. Leave the boots alone.

John. No. It's my duty, and I'm bound to do it, but I didn't take on the job of being your playmate. Besides, the thing is out of the question, as I consider myself much too good for that kind of thing.

Julie. You're proud.

John. In some cases, not in others.

Julie. Have you ever loved?

John. We people don't use that word. But I've liked many girls, and once it made me quite ill not to be able to get the girl I wanted, as ill, mind you, as the princes in "The Arabian Nights," who are unable to eat or drink out of pure love. [*He takes up the boots again.*]

Julie. Who was it? [JOHN *is silent.*]

John. You can't compel me to tell you.

Julie. If I ask you as an equal, as—a friend? Who was it?

John. You!

Julie. [*Sits down.*] How funny!

John. And if you want to hear the story, here goes! It was humorous. This is the tale, mind you, which I would not tell you before, but I'll tell you right enough now. Do you know how the world looks from down below? No, of course you don't. Like hawks and eagles,

whose backs a man can scarcely ever see because they're always flying in the air. I grew up in my father's hovel along with seven sisters and—a pig—out there on the bare gray field, where there wasn't a single tree growing, and I could look out from the window on to the walls of the Count's parks, with its apple-trees. That was my Garden of Eden, and many angels stood there with a flaming sword and guarded it, but all the same I, and other boys, found my way to the Tree of Life—do you despise me?

Julie. Oh, well—stealing apples? All boys do that.

John. That's what you say, but you despise me all the same. Well, what's the odds! Once I went with my mother inside the garden, to weed out the onion bed. Close by the garden wall there stood a Turkish pavilion, shaded by jasmine and surrounded by wild roses. I had no idea what it was used for, but I'd never seen so fine a building. People went in and out, and one day the door stood open. I sneaked in, and saw the walls covered with pictures of queens and emperors, and red curtains with fringes were in front of the windows—now you know what I mean. I—— [*He takes a lilac branch and holds it under the young lady's nose.*] I'd never been in the Abbey, and I'd never seen anything else but the church—but this was much finer, and wherever my thoughts roamed they always came back again to it, and then little by little the desire sprang up in me to get to know, some time, all this magnificence. *Enfin,* I sneaked in, saw and wondered, but then somebody came. There was, of course, only one way out for the gentry, but I found another one, and, again, I had no choice. [JULIE, *who has taken up the lilac branch, lets it fall on the table.*] So I flew, and rushed through a lilac bush, clambered over a garden bed and came out by a terrace of roses. I there saw a light dress and a pair of white stockings—that was you. I laid down under a heap of herbage, right under them. Can you

imagine it?—under thistles which stung me and wet earth which stank, and I looked at you where you came between the roses, and I thought if it is true that a murderer can get into the kingdom of heaven, and remain among the angels, it is strange if here, on God's own earth, a poor lad like me can't get into the Abbey park and play with the Count's daughter.

Julie. [*Sentimentally.*] Don't you think that all poor children under similar circumstances have had the same thoughts?

John. [*At first hesitating, then in a tone of conviction.*] That all poor children—yes—of course. Certainly.

Julie. Being poor must be an infinite misfortune.

John. [*With deep pain.*] Oh, Miss Julie. Oh! A dog can lie on the Count's sofa, a horse can be petted by a lady's hand, on its muzzle, but a boy! [*With a change of tone.*] Yes, yes; a man of individuality here and there may have enough stuff in him to come to the top, but how often is that the case? What do you think I did then?—I jumped into the mill-stream, clothes and all, but was fished out and given a thrashing. But the next Sunday, when father and all of the people at home went to grandmother's, I managed to work it that I stayed at home, and I then had a wash with soap and warm water, put on my Sunday clothes and went to church, where I could get a sight of you. I saw you and went home determined to die, but I wanted to die in a fine and agreeable way, without pain, and I then got the idea that it was dangerous to sleep under a lilac bush. We had one which at that time was in full bloom. I picked all the blooms which it had and then lay down in the oat bin. Have you ever noticed how smooth the oats are? As soft to the hand as human skin. I then shut the lid, and at last went to sleep and woke up really very ill; but I didn't die, as you see. I don't know what I really wanted; there was no earthly possibility of win-

ning you. But you were a proof for me of the utter hopelessness of escaping from the circle in which I'd been born.

Julie. You tell a story charmingly, don't you know. Have you been to school?

John. A little, but I've read a lot of novels, and been a lot to the theater. Besides, I've heard refined people talk, and I've learned most from them.

Julie. Do you listen, then, to what we say?

John. Yes, that's right; and I've picked up a great deal when I've sat on the coachman's box or been rowing the boat. I once heard you, Miss, and a young lady friend of yours.

Julie. Really? What did you hear then?

John. Well, that I can't tell you, but I was really somewhat surprised, and I couldn't understand where you'd learned all the words from. Perhaps at bottom there isn't so great a difference between class and class as one thinks.

Julie. Oh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! We are not like you are, and we have someone whom we love best.

John. [*Fixes her with his eyes.*] Are you so sure of that? You needn't make yourself out so innocent, Miss, on my account.

Julie. The man to whom I gave my love was a scoundrel.

John. Girls always say that—afterward.

Julie. Always?

John. Always, I think. I've certainly already heard the phrase on several previous occasions, in similar circumstances.

Julie. What circumstances?

John. The last time——

Julie. Stop! I won't hear any more.

John. She wouldn't either—it's remarkable. Oh, well, will you excuse me if I go to bed?

Julie. [*Tartly.*] Go to bed on Midsummer Night?

John. Yes. Dance out there with the riff-raff, that doesn't amuse me the least bit.

Julie. Take the key of the boathouse and row me out on the lake. I want to see the sun rise.

John. Is that sensible?

Julie. It seems you're concerned about your reputation.

John. Why not? I'm not keen on making myself look ridiculous, nor on being kicked out without a reference, if I want to set up on my own, and it seems to me I have certain obligations to Christine.

Julie. Oh, indeed! So it's Christine again?

John. Yes; but it's on your account as well. Take my advice and go up and go to bed.

Julie. Shall I obey you?

John. This once for your own sake, I ask you; it's late at night, sleepiness makes one dazed, and one's blood boils. You go and lie down. Besides, if I can believe my ears, people are coming to find me, and if we are found here you are lost. [*Chorus is heard in the distance and gets nearer.*]

"She pleases me like one o'clock,
My pretty young lidee,
For thoughts of her my bosom block,
Her servant must I be,
For she delights my heart,
Tiritidi—ralla, tiritidi—ra!

"And now I've won the match,
For which I've long been trying,
The other swains go flying,
But she comes up to scratch,
My pretty young lidee,
Tiritidi—ralla—la—la!"

Julie. I know our people, and I like them—just in the same way that they like me. Just let them come, then you'll see.

John. No, Miss Julie. The folks don't love you. They eat your bread, but they make fun of you behind your back. You take it from me. Listen, just listen, to what they're singing. No, you'd better not listen.

Julie. [*Listens.*] What are they singing?

John. It's some nasty lines about you and me.

Julie. Horrible! Ugh, what sneaks they are!

John. The riff-raff is always cowardly, and in the fight it's best to fly.

Julie. Fly? But where to? We can't go out, and we can't go up to Christine's room either.

John. Then come into my room. Necessity knows no law, and you can rely on my being your real, sincere and respectful friend.

Julie. But just think, would they look for you there?

John. I'll bolt the door, and if they try to break it in I'll shoot. Come. [*On his knees.*] Come!

Julie. [*Significantly.*] Promise me.

John. On my oath!

[JULIE *rushes off on the left.* JOHN *follows her in a state of excitement. Pantomime. Wedding party in holiday clothes, with flowers round their hats and a violin player at their head, come in through the glass door. Barrel of small beer and a keg of brandy wreathed with laurel are placed on the table. They take up glasses, they then drink, they then make a ring and a dance is sung and executed. Then they go out, singing again, through the glass door.* JULIE *comes in alone from the left, observes the disorder in the kitchen and claps her hands; she then takes out a powder puff and powders her face.* JOHN *follows after the young woman from the left, in a state of exaltation.*]

John. There, do you see, you've seen it for yourself now. You think it possible to go on staying here?

Julie. No, I don't any more. But what's to be done?

John. Run away—travel, far away from here.

Julie. Travel? Yes, but where?

John. Sweden—the Italian lakes, you've never been there, have you?

Julie. No; is it nice there?

John. Oh! A perpetual summer—oranges, laurels. Whew!

Julie. What are we to start doing afterward?

John. We shall start a first-class hotel there, with first-class visitors.

Julie. An hotel?

John. That's a life, to be sure, you take it from me—an endless succession of new sights, new languages; not a minute to spare for sulking or brooding; no looking for work, for the work comes of its own. The bell goes on ringing day and night, the train puffs, the omnibus comes and goes, while the gold pieces roll into the till. That's a life, to be sure!

Julie. Yes, that's what *you* call life; but what about me?

John. The mistress of the house, the ornament of the firm, with your appearance and your manners—oh! success is certain. Splendid! You sit like a queen in the counting house, and set all your slaves in motion, with a single touch of your electric bell; the visitors pass in procession by your throne, lay their treasure respectfully on your table; you've got no idea how men tremble when they take a bill up in their hand—I'll touch up the bills, and you must sugar them with your sweetest laugh. Ah, let's get away from here. [*He takes a time-table out of his pocket.*] Right away by the next train, by six-thirty we're at Malmo; at eight-forty in the morning at Hamburg; Frankfort—one day in Basle and in Como by the St. Gothard Tunnel in—let's see—three days. Only three days.

Julie. That all sounds very nice, but, John, you must give me courage, dear. Tell me that you love me, dear; come and take me in your arms.

John. [*Hesitating.*] I should like to—but I dare not

—not here in the house. I love you, no doubt about it—can you have any real doubt about it, Miss?

Julie. [*With real feminine shame.*] Miss? Say "Dear." There are no longer any barriers between us—say "Dear."

John. [*In a hurt tone.*] I can't. There are still barriers between us so long as we remain in this house: there is the past—there is my master the Count; I never met a man whom I've respected so much—I've only got to see his gloves lying on a chair and straight away I feel quite small; I've only got to hear the bell up there and I dash away like a startled horse and—I've only got to see his boots standing there, so proud and upright, and I've got a pain inside. [*He pushes the boots with his feet.*] Superstition, prejudice, which have been inoculated into us since our childhood, but which one can't get rid of. But only come to another country, to a republic, and I'll make people go on their knees before my porter's livery—on their knees, do you hear? You'll see. But not me: I'm not made to go on my knees, for I've got grit in me, character, and, once I get on to the first branch, you'll see me climb right up. To-day I'm a servant, but next year I shall be the proprietor of a hotel; in ten years I shall be independent; then I'll take a trip to Roumania and get myself decorated, and may—note that I say, may—finish up as a count.

Julie. Good! Good!

John. Oh, yes, the title of Count is to be bought in Roumania, and then you will be a countess—my countess.

Julie. Tell me that you love me, dear, if you don't—why, what am I, if you don't?

John. I'll tell you a thousand times later on, but not here. And above all, no sentimentalism, if everything isn't to go smash. We must look at the matter quietly, like sensible people. [*He takes out a cigar, cuts off the end, and lights it.*] You sit there, I'll sit here; then we'll have a little chat just as though nothing had happened.

Julie. O my God! have you no feeling then?

John. Me? There's no man who has more feeling than I have; but I can control myself.

Julie. A short time back you could kiss my shoe—and now?

John. [*Brutally.*] Yes, a little while ago, but now we've got something else to think of.

Julie. Don't talk brutally to me.

John. No, but I'll talk sense. We've made fools of ourselves once, don't let's do it again. The Count may turn up any minute and we've got to map out our lives in advance. What do you think of my plans for the future? Do you agree?

Julie. They seem quite nice, but one question—you need large capital for so great an undertaking—have you got it?

John. [*Going on smoking.*] Have I got it? Of course I have. I've got my special knowledge, my exceptional experience, my knowledge of languages, that's a capital which is worth something, seems to me.

Julie. But we can't buy a single railway ticket with all that.

John. That's true enough, and so I'll look for somebody who can put up the money.

Julie. Where can you find a man like that all at once?

John. Then you'll have to find him, if you're going to be my companion.

Julie. I can't do that, and I've got nothing myself. [*Pause.*]

John. In that case the whole scheme collapses.

Julie. And?

John. Things remain as they are now.

Julie. Do you think I'll go on staying any longer under this roof as your mistress? Do you think I will let the people point their finger at me? Do you think that after this I can look my father in the face? No! Take me away from here, from all this humiliation and dis-

honor! O my God! What have I done! O my God! My God! [*She cries.*]

John. Ho—ho! So that's the game—what have you done? Just the same as a thousand other people like you.

Julie. [*Screams as though in a paroxysm.*] And now you despise me? I'm falling, I'm falling!

John. Fall down to my level and then I'll lift you up again afterward.

Julie. What awful power dragged me down to you, the power which draws the weak to the strong?—which draws him who falls to him who rises? Or was it love?—love—this! Do you know what love is?

John. I? Do you really suggest that I meant that? Don't you think I'd have felt it already long ago?

Julie. What phrases to be sure, and what thoughts!

John. That's what I learned and that's what I am. But just keep your nerve and don't play the fine lady. We've got into a mess and we've got to get out of it. Look here, my girl. Come here, I'll give you an extra glass, my dear. [*He opens the sideboard, takes out the bottle of wine and fills two of the dirty glasses.*]

Julie. Where did you get the wine from?

John. The cellar.

Julie. My father's Burgundy!

John. Is it too good for his son-in-law? I don't think!

Julie. And I've been drinking beer!

John. That only shows that you've got worse taste than me.

Julie. Thief!

John. Want to blab?

Julie. Oh, oh! the accomplice of a house-thief. I drank too much last night and I did things in my dream. Midsummer Night, the feast of innocent joys.

John. Innocent! Hm!

Julie. [*Walks up and down.*] Is there at this moment a human being as unhappy as I am?

John. Why are you? After such a fine conquest. Just think of Christine in there, don't you think she's got feelings as well?

Julie. I used to think so before, but I don't think so any more—no, a servant's a servant——

John. And a whore's a whore.

Julie. O God in heaven! Take my miserable life! Take me out of this filth in which I'm sinking. Save me, save me!

John. I can't gainsay but that you make me feel sorry. Once upon a time when I lay in the onion bed and saw you in the rose garden then—I'll tell you straight—I had the same dirty thoughts as all youngsters.

Julie. And then you wanted to die for me!

John. In the oat bin? That was mere gas.

Julie. Lies, you mean.

John. [*Begins to get sleepy.*] Near enough. I read the story once in the paper about a chimney-sweep who laid down in a chest full of lilac because he was ordered to take additional nourishment.

Julie. Yes—so you are——

John. What other idea should I have thought of? One's always got to capture a gal with flatteries.

Julie. Scoundrel!

John. Whore!

Julie. So I must be the first branch, must I?

John. But the branch was rotten.

Julie. I've got to be the notice board of the hotel, have I?

John. I'm going to be the hotel.

Julie. Sit in your office, decoy your customers, fake your bills.

John. I'll see to that myself.

Julie. To think that a human being can be so thoroughly dirty!

John. Wash yourself clean.

Julie. Lackey! Menial! Stand up—you, when I'm speaking!

John. You wench of a menial! Hold your jaw and clear out! Is it for you to come ragging me that I'm rough? No one in my station of life could have made herself so cheap as the way you carried on to-night, my girl. Do you think that a clean-minded girl excites men in the way that you do? Have you ever seen a girl in my position offer herself in the way you did?

Julie. [*Humiliated.*] That's right, strike me, trample on me! I haven't deserved anything better. I'm a wretched woman. But help me! Help me to get away, if there's any chance of it.

John. [*More gently.*] I don't want to deny my share in the honor of having seduced you, but do you think that a person in my position would have dared to have raised his eyes to you if you yourself hadn't invited him to do it? I'm still quite amazed.

Julie. And proud.

John. Why not? Although I must acknowledge that the victory was too easy to make me get a swelled head over it.

Julie. Strike me once more!

John. [*He gets up.*] No, I'd rather ask you to forgive me what I've already said. I don't hit a defenceless person, and least of all a girl. I can't deny that from one point of view I enjoyed seeing that it was not gold but glitter which dazzled us all down below; to have seen that the back of the hawk was only drab, and that there was powder on those dainty cheeks, and that those manicured nails could have grimy tips, that the handkerchief was dirty, even though it did smell of scent! But it pained me, on the other hand, to have seen that the thing I'd been striving for was not something higher, something sounder; it pains me to have seen you sink so deep that you are far beneath your own

cook; it pains me to see that the autumn flowers have crumpled up in the rain and turned into a mess.

Julie. You're talking as though you were already my superior.

John. I am; look here, I could change you into a countess, but you could never make me into a count!

Julie. But I am bred from a count, and that you can never be.

John. That's true, but I could produce counts myself if——

Julie. But you're a thief, and I'm not.

John. There are worse things than being a thief; that's not the worst; besides, if I'm serving in a household, I look upon myself in a manner of speaking as one of the family, as a child of the house, and it isn't regarded as stealing if a child picks a berry from a large bunch. [*His passion wakes up afresh.*] Miss Julie, you're a magnificent woman, much too good for the likes of me. You've been the prey of a mad fit and you want to cover up your mistake, and that's why you've got it into your head you love me, but you don't. Of course, it may be that only my personal charms attract you—and in that case your love is not a bit better than mine; but I can never be satisfied with being nothing more to you than a mere beast, and I can't get your love.

Julie. Are you sure of it?

John. You mean it might come about? I might love you? Yes, no doubt about it, you're pretty, you're refined. [*He approaches her and takes her hand.*] Nice, when you want to be, and when you have roused desire in a man the odds are that it will never be extinguished. [*He embraces her.*] You are like burning wine, with strong herbs in it, and a kiss from you—— [*He tries to lead her on to the left, but she struggles free.*]

Julie. Let me alone! That's not the way to win me!

John. In what way then? Not in that way? Not with caresses and pretty words—not with forethought

for the future, escape from disgrace? In what way then?

Julie. In what way? In what way? I don't know—I have no idea. I loathe you like vermin, but I can't be without you.

John. Run away with me.

Julie. [*Adjusts her dress.*] Run away? Yes, of course we'll run away. But I'm so tired. Give me a glass of wine. [JOHN *pours out the wine.* JULIE *looks at her watch.*] But we must talk first, we've still a little time to spare. [*She drinks up the glass and holds it out for some more.*]

John. Don't drink to such excess—you'll get drunk!

Julie. What does it matter?

John. What does it matter? It's cheap to get drunk. What do you want to say to me then?

Julie. We'll run away, but we'll talk first, that means I will talk, because up to now you've done all the talking yourself. You've told me about your life, now I'll tell you about mine. Then we shall know each other thoroughly, before we start on our joint wanderings.

John. One moment. Excuse me, just think if you won't be sorry afterward for giving away all the secrets of your life.

Julie. Aren't you my friend?

John. Yes, for a short time. Don't trust me.

Julie. You don't mean what you say. Besides, everybody knows my secrets. Look here, my mother was not of noble birth, but quite simple; she was brought up in the theories of her period about the equality and freedom of woman and all the rest of it. Then she had a distinct aversion to marriage. When my father proposed to her, she answered that she would never become his wife, but—she did. I came into the world—against the wish of my mother so far as I could understand. The next was, that I was brought up by my mother to lead what she called a child's natural life, and to do that, I had to learn everything that a boy has to

learn, so that I could be a living example of her theory that a woman is as good as a man. I could go about in boys' clothes. I learned to groom horses, but I wasn't allowed to go into the dairy. I had to scrub and harness horses and go hunting. Yes, and at times I had actually to try and learn farm work, and at home the men were given women's work and the women were given men's work—the result was that the property began to go down and we became the laughing-stock of the whole neighborhood. At last my father appears to have wakened up out of his trance and to have rebelled; then everything was altered to suit his wishes. My mother became ill. I don't know what the illness was, but she often suffered from seizures, hid herself in the grounds and in the garden, and remained in the open air the whole night. Then came the great fire, which you must have heard about. House, farm buildings and stables all were burnt, and under circumstances, mind you, which gave a suspicion of arson, because the accident happened the day after the expiration of the quarterly payment of the insurance instalment, and the premiums which my father had sent were delayed through the carelessness of the messenger, so that they did not get there in time. [*She fills her glass and drinks.*]

John. Don't drink any more.

Julie. Oh, what does it matter? We were without shelter and had to sleep in the carriage. My father didn't know where he was to get the money to build a house again. Then my mother advised him to approach a friend of her youth for a loan, a tile manufacturer in the neighborhood. Father got the loan, but didn't have to pay any interest, which made him quite surprised, and then the house was built. [*She drinks again.*] You know who set fire to the house?

John. My lady your mother.

Julie. Do you know who the tile manufacturer was?

John. Your mother's lover.

Julie. Do you know whose the money was?

John. Wait a minute. No, that I don't know.

Julie. My mother's.

John. The Count's then?—unless they were living with separate estates?

Julie. They weren't doing that. My mother had a small fortune, which she didn't allow my father to handle, and she invested it with—the friend.

John. Who banked it.

Julie. Quite right. This all came to my father's ears, but he could not take any legal steps; he couldn't pay his wife's lover; he couldn't prove that it was his wife's money. That was my mother's revenge for his using force against her at home. He then made up his mind to shoot himself. The report went about that he had wanted to do it, but hadn't succeeded. He remained alive then, and my mother had to settle for what she'd done. That was a bad time for me, as you can imagine. I sympathized with my father, but I sided with my mother, as I didn't understand the position. I learnt from her to mistrust and hate men, for, so far as I could hear. she always hated men—and I swore to her that I would never be a man's slave.

John. And then you became engaged to Kronvogt?

Julie. For the simple reason that he was to have been my slave.

John. And he wouldn't have it?

Julie. He was willing enough, but nothing came of it. I got sick of him.

John. I saw it, in the stable.

Julie. What did you see?

John. I saw how he broke off the engagement.

Julie. That's a lie. It was I who broke off the engagement. Did he say that he did it? The scoundrel!

John. No, he wasn't a scoundrel at all. You hate the men, Miss.

Julie. Yes—usually, but at times, when my weak fit comes on—ugh!

John. So you hate me as well?

Julie. Infinitely. I could have you killed like a beast.

John. The criminal is condemned to hard labor, but the beast is killed.

Julie. Quite right.

John. But there's no beast here—and no prosecutor either. What are we going to do?

Julie. Travel.

John. To torture each other to death?

Julie. No—have a good time for two, three years, or as long as we can—and then die.

John. Die? What nonsense! I'm all for starting a hotel.

Julie. [*Without listening to him.*] By the Lake of Como, where the sun is always shining, where the laurel-trees are green at Christmas and the oranges glow.

John. The Lake of Como is a rainy hole. I didn't see any oranges there, except in the vegetable shops; but it's a good place for visitors, because there are a lot of villas which can be let to honeymooning couples, and that's a very profitable industry. I'll tell you why. They take a six months' lease—and travel away after three weeks.

Julie. [*Naively.*] Why after three weeks?

John. They quarrel, of course; but the rent's got to be paid all the same, and then we let again, and so it goes on one after the other, for love goes on to all eternity—even though it doesn't keep quite so long.

Julie. Then you won't die with me?

John. I won't die at all just yet, thank you. In the first place, because I still enjoy life, and, besides, because I look upon suicide as a sin against providence, which has given us life.

Julie. Do you believe in God—you?

John. Yes, I certainly do, and I go to church every

other Sunday. But, speaking frankly, I'm tired of all this, and I'm going to bed now.

Julie. You are, are you? And you think that I'm satisfied with that? Do you know what a man owes to the woman he has dishonored?

John. [*Takes out his purse and throws a silver coin on the table.*] If you don't mind, I don't like being in anybody's debt.

Julie. [*As though she had not noticed the insult.*] Do you know what the law provides?

John. Unfortunately the law does not provide any penalty for the woman who seduces a man.

Julie. [*As before.*] Can you find any other way out than that we should travel, marry and then get divorced again?

John. And if I refuse to take on the *mésalliance?*

Julie. Mésalliance?

John. Yes, for me. I've got better ancestors than you have: I haven't got any incendiaries in my pedigree.

Julie. How do you know?

John. At any rate, you can't prove the contrary, for we have no other pedigree than what you can see in the registry. But I read in a book on the drawing-room table about your pedigree. Do you know what the founder of your line was? A miller with whose wife the king spent a night during the Danish war. I don't run to ancestors like that. I've got no ancestors at all, as a matter of fact, but I can be an ancestor myself.

Julie. This is what I get for opening my heart to a cad, for giving away my family honor.

John. Family shame, you mean. But, look here, I told you so; people shouldn't drink, because then people talk nonsense, and people shouldn't talk nonsense.

Juli. Oh, how I wish it undone, how I wish it undone! And if you only loved me!

John. For the last time—what do you want? Do you want me to cry, do you want me to jump over your

riding whip, do you want me to kiss you, or tempt you away for three weeks by the Lake of Como, and then, what am I to do?—what do you want? The thing's beginning to be a nuisance, but that's what one gets for meddling in the private affairs of the fair sex. Miss Julie, I see you're unhappy, I know that you suffer, but I can't understand you. People like us don't go in for such fairy tales; we don't hate each other either. We take love as a game, when our work gives us time off, but we haven't got the whole day and the whole night to devote to it. Let me look at you. You are ill; you are certainly ill!

Julie. You must be kind to me, and now talk like a man. Help me! Help me! Tell me what I must do—what course I shall take.

John. My Christ! If I only knew myself!

Julie. I am raving, I have been mad! But isn't there any way by which I can be saved?

John. Stay here and keep quiet. Nobody knows anything.

Julie. Impossible! The servants know it; and Christine knows it.

John. They don't know and they would never believe anything of the kind.

Julie. [*Slowly.*] It might happen again.

John. That's true.

Julie. And the results?

John. The results? Where was I wool-gathering not to have thought about it? Yes, there's only one thing to do—to clear out at once. I won't go with you, because then it's all up, but you must travel alone—away—anywhere you like.

Julie. Alone? Where? I can't do it.

John. You must. And before the Count comes back too. If you stay then you know what will be the result. If one has taken the first step, then one goes on with

it, because one's already in for the disgrace, and then one gets bolder and bolder—at last you get copped—so you must travel. Write later on to the Count and confess everything except that it was me, and he'll never guess that. I don't think either that he'd be very pleased if he did find out.

Julie. I'll travel, if you'll come with me.

John. Are you mad, Miss? Do you want to elope with your servant? It'll all be in the papers the next morning, and the Count would never get over it.

Julie. I can't travel, I can't stay. Help me! I am so tired, so infinitely tired—give me orders, put life into me again or I can't think any more, and I can't do any more.

John. See here, now, what a wretched creature you are! Why do you strut about and turn up your nose as though you were the lord of creation? Well, then, I will give you orders; you go and change your clothes, get some money to travel with and come down here again.

Julie. [*Sotto voce.*] Come up with me.

John. To your room? Now you're mad again. [*He hesitates for a moment.*] No, you go at once. [*He takes her by the hand and leads her to the glass door.*]

Julie. [*As she goes.*] Please speak kindly to me, John.

John. An order always has an unkind sound. Just feel it now for yourself, just feel it. [*Exeunt both.*

[JOHN *comes back, gives a sigh of relief, sits down at the table by the right, and takes out his note-book, now and again he counts aloud; pantomime.* CHRISTINE *comes in with a white shirt-front and a white necktie in her hand.*]

Christine. Good Lord! What does the man look like! What's happened here?

John. Oh, Miss Julie called in the servants. Were you so sound asleep that you didn't hear it?

Christine. I slept like a log.

John. And dressed all ready for church?

Christine. Yes. You know you promised, dear, to come to Communion with me to-day.

John. Yes, that's true, and you've already got some of my togs for me. Well, come here. [*He sits down on the right.* CHRISTINE *gives him the white front and neck-tie and helps him to put them on. Pause.*] [*Sleepily.*] What gospel is it to-day?

Christine. I've got an idea it's about the beheading of John the Baptist.

John. That's certain to last an awful time! Ugh! You're hurting me. Oh, I'm so sleepy, so sleepy!

Christine. Yes, what have you been doing all night? You look absolutely washed out.

John. I've been sitting here chatting with Miss Julie.

Christine. She doesn't know what's decent. My God! she doesn't. [*Pause.*]

John. I say, Christine dear.

Christine. Well?

John. It's awfully strange when one comes to think it over.

Christine. What's so strange about her?

John. Everything. [*Pause.*]

Christine. [*Looks at the glass which stands half empty on the table.*] Did you drink together as well?

John. Yes.

Christine. Ugh! Look me in the face.

John. Yes.

Christine. Is it possible? Is it possible?

John. [*After reflecting for a short time.*] Yes, it is.

Christine. Crikey! I'd never have thought it, that I wouldn't. No. Ugh! Ugh!

John. I take it you're not jealous of her?

Christine. No, not of her; if it had been Clara or Sophie, yes, I should have been. Poor girl! Now, I tell you what. I won't stay any longer in this house, where one can't keep any respect for the gentry.

John. Why should one respect them?

Christine. Yes, and you, who are as sly as they're made, ask me that. But will you serve people who carry on so improper? Why, one lowers oneself by doing it, it seems to me.

John. Yes, but it's certainly a consolation for us that the others are no better than we are.

Christine. No, I don't find that; because if they're not better it's not worth while trying to be like our betters, and think of the Count, think of him; he's had so much trouble all his life long. No, I won't stay any longer in this house. And with the likes of you! If it had been even Kronvogt; if it had been a better man.

John. What do you mean?

Christine. Yes, yes, you're quite a good fellow, I know, but there's always a difference between people and people—and I can never forget it. A young lady who was so proud, so haughty to the men that one could never imagine that she would ever give herself to a man—and then the likes of you! Her, who wanted to have the poor Diana shot dead at once, because she ran after a dog in the courtyard. Yes, I must say that; but I won't stay here any longer, and on the 24th of October I go my way.

John. And then?

Christine. Well, as we're on the subject, it would be about time for you to look out for another job, as we want to get married.

John. Yes, what kind of a job am I to look out for? I can't get as good a place as this, if I'm married.

Christine. Of course you can't, but you must try to get a place as porter, or see if you can get a situation as a servant in some public institution. The victuals are few but certain, and then the wife and children get a pension.

John. [*With a grimace.*] That's all very fine, but it's not quite my line of country to start off about thinking

of dying for wife and child. I must confess that I've higher views.

Christine. Your views, to be sure! But you've also got obligations. Just think of her.

John. You mustn't nag me by talking about my obligations. I know quite well what I've got to do. [*He listens for a sound outside.*] But we've got time enough to think about all this. Go in, and get ready, and then we'll go to church.

Christine. Who's walking about upstairs?

John. I don't know—perhaps Clara.

Christine. [*Goes.*] I suppose it can't be the Count who's come back without anyone having heard him?

John. [*Nervously.*] No, I don't think so, because then he'd have rung already.

Christine. Yes. God knows. I've gone through the likes of this before. [*Exit to the right. The sun has risen in the meanwhile and gradually illuminates the tops of the trees outside, the light grows gradually deeper till it falls slanting on the window.* JOHN *goes to the glass door and makes a sign.*]

Julie. [*Comes in in traveling dress, with a small bird cage covered with a handkerchief, and places it on a chair.*] I'm ready now.

John. Hush! Christine is awake.

Julie. [*Extremely excited in the following scene.*] Did she have any idea?

John. She knows nothing. But, my God! what a sight you look.

Julie. What! How do I look?

John. You're as white as a corpse and, pardon my saying it, your face is dirty.

Julie. Then give me some water to wash—all right. [*She goes to the washing-stand and washes her face and hands.*] Give me a towel. Ah! the sun has risen.

John. And then the hobgoblin flies away.

Julie. Yes, a goblin has really been at work last night.

Listen to me. Come with me. I've got the needful, John.

John. [*Hesitating.*] Enough?

Julie. Enough to start on. Come with me, I can't travel alone to-day. Just think of it. Midsummer Day in a stuffy train, stuck in among a lot of people who stare at one; waiting about at stations when one wants to fly. No; I can't do it! I can't do it! And then all my memories, my memories of Midsummer's Day when I was a child, with the church decorated with flowers—birch and lilac; the midday meal at a splendidly covered table; relatives and friends; the afternoon in the park; dancing and music, flowers and games. Ah! you can run away and run away, but your memories, your repentance and your pangs of conscience follow on in the luggage van.

John. I'll come with you, but right away, before it's too late. Now. Immediately.

Julie. Then get ready. [*She takes up the bird cage.*]

John. But no luggage. In that case we're lost.

Julie. No, no luggage, only what we can take with us in the compartment.

John. [*Has taken a hat.*] What have you got there then? What is it?

Julie. It's only my little canary. I don't want to leave it behind.

John. Come, I say! Have we got to cart along a bird cage with us? How absolutely mad! Leave the bird there!

Julie. The only thing I'm taking with me from home! The one living creature that likes me, after Diana was faithless to me! Don't be cruel. Let me take it with me!

John. Leave it there, I tell you—and don't talk so loud. Christine might hear us.

Julie. No, I won't leave it behind among strangers. I'd rather you killed it.

John. Then give me the little thing; I'll twist its neck for it.

Julie. Yes, but don't hurt it; don't! No, I can't!

John. Hand it over—I'll do the trick.

Julie. [*Takes the bird out of the cage and kisses it.*] Oh, my dicky bird! Must you die by the hand of your own mistress?

John. Be good enough not to make any scene; your life and well-being are at stake. That's right, quick! [*He snatches the bird out of her hand, carries it to the chopping block, and takes the kitchen knife.*] [JULIE *turns round.*] You should have learned to kill fowls instead of shooting with your revolver. [*Chops.*] And then you wouldn't have fainted at the sight of a drop of blood.

Julie. [*Shrieking.*] Kill me too, kill me! If you can kill an innocent animal without your hand shaking! Oh, I hate and loathe you! There is blood between us! I curse the hour in which I saw you! I curse the hour in which I was born!

John. Now, what's the good of your cursing? Let's go!

Julie. [*Approaches the chopping block as though attracted to it against her will.*] No, I won't go yet, I can't —I must see. Hush! there's a wagon outside. [*She listens, while her eyes are riveted in a stare on the chopping block and the knife.*] Do you think I can't look at any blood? Do you think I'm so weak? Oh! I'd just like to see your blood and your brains on the chopping block. I'd like to see your whole stock swimming in a lake, like the one there. I believe I could drink out of your skull! I could wash my feet in your chest! I could eat your heart roasted! You think I am weak! You think I love you! You think I mean to carry your spawn under my heart and feed it with my own blood; bear your child and give it your name! I say, you, what is your name? I've never heard your surname—you haven't got any, I should think. I shall be Mrs. Head Waiter, or Madame Chimney Sweeper. You hound! You, who wear my livery, you menial, who wear my arms on your buttons—

I've got to go shares with my cook, have I?—to compete with my own servant? Oh! oh! oh! You think I'm a coward and want to run away? No, now I'm going to stay, and then the storm can burst. My father comes home—he finds his secretary broken open and his money stolen—then he rings the bell twice—for his servant—and then he sends for the police—and then I shall tell him everything. Everything! Oh, it's fine to make an end of the thing—if it would only have an end. And then he gets a stroke, and dies—and that's the end of the whole story. And then comes peace and quiet—eternal peace. And then the escutcheon is broken over the coffin: the noble race is extinct—and the servant's brat grows up in a foundling hospital—and wins his spurs in the gutter, and finishes up in a prison. [CHRISTINE, *dressed for church, enters on the right, hymn book in hand.* JULIE *rushes to her and falls into her arms, as though seeking protection.*] Help me, Christine; help me against this man!

Christine. [*Immobile and cold.*] What a pretty sight for a holiday morning! [*She looks at the chopping block.*] And what a dirty mess you've been making here! What can it all mean? How you're shrieking and——

Julie. Christine, you're a woman, and my friend. Beware of this scoundrel.

John. [*Slightly shy and embarrassed.*] If you ladies want to have an argument, I'll go in and have a shave. [*He sneaks away to the right.*]

Julie. You will understand me, and you must do what I tell you.

Christine. No, I certainly don't understand such carryings-on. Where are you going to in your traveling dress? And he's got his hat on. What's it all mean?

Julie. Listen to me, Christine; listen to me; then I'll tell you everything.

Christine. I don't want to know anything.

Julie. You must listen to me.

Christine. What is it, then? Your tomfoolery with John? Look here; I don't care anything about that, because it had nothing to do with me, but if you think you're going to tempt him to elope with you, then we'll put a very fine spoke in your little wheel.

Julie. [*Extremely excited.*] Try to be calm, Christine, and listen to me! I can't stay here, and John can't stay here, so we must travel.

Christine. Hm, hm!

Julie. [*With sudden inspiration.*] But, look here. I've got an idea now. How about if we all three went—abroad—to Switzerland and started a hotel together? I've got money. [*She shows it.*] You see; and John and I will look after the whole thing, and you, I thought, could take over the kitchen. Isn't it nice? Just say yes, and come with us, and all is fixed up. Just say yes. [*She embraces* CHRISTINE *and hugs her tenderly.*]

Christine. [*Cold and contemplative.*] Hm, hm!

Julie. [*Quicker.*] You've never been out and traveled, Christine—you must come out in the world and look round; you can have no idea how jolly it is to travel on a railway—to be always seeing new people—new countries. And then we get to Hamburg and take a trip through the Zoological Gardens. What do you think of it? And then we'll go to the theater and hear the opera—and when we get to Munich we've got the museums, and there are Rubenses and Raphaels—pictures by the two great painters, you see. You've heard people talk of Munich, where King Ludwig used to live—the king, you know, who went mad—and then we'll go over his castles—he has castles which are got up just like fairy tales—and it's not far from there to Switzerland—with the Alps. Ugh! just think of the Alps covered with snow in the middle of summer; and tangerines and laurel trees grow there which are in bloom the whole year round. [JOHN *appears on the right, stretching his razor on a strop, which he holds with his teeth and his left hand.*

He listens with pleasure to her speech, and now and again nods assent.] [*Extremely quickly.*] And then we take a hotel—and I sit in the bureau while John stands up and receives the visitors—goes out and does business—writes letters. That's a life, you take it from me; then the train puffs, the omnibus comes, the bells ring in the hotel itself, the bell rings in the restaurant—and then I make out the bills—and I'll touch them up—you can have no idea how shy travelers are when they've got to pay their bill. And you—you're installed as mistress in the kitchen. Of course, you haven't yourself got to stand by the fireplace, and you've got to have nice pretty dresses when you have to appear before the visitors—and a girl with an appearance like you—no, I'm not flattering you—you can get a husband perhaps some fine day, some rich Englishman; you see, people are so easy to catch. [*She commences to speak more slowly.*] And then we shall get rich—and we'll build a villa by Lake Como—of course it rains there now and then, but [*in a less tense tone*] there's certain to be a great deal of sun—even though there's gloomy weather as well—and—then—then we can travel home again—and come back [*pause*] here—or anywhere else.

Christine. Look here, Miss; do you believe in all this yourself?

Julie. [*Crushed.*] Do I believe in it myself?

Christine. Yes.

Julie. [*Tired.*] I don't know. I don't really believe in anything any more. [*She sits down on the seat and lays her head on the table between her arms.*] In anything, in anything at all.

Christine. [*Turns to the left, where* JOHN *is standing.*] So you thought you'd elope, did you?

John. [*Shamefaced, puts his razor on the table.*] Elope? Come, that's a big word—you heard Miss Julie's plan; and although she's tired now, from having been up all night, the scheme can still be put through.

Christine. I say, did you mean that I should be cook there, for her?

John. [*Sharply.*] Be so kind as to speak more refined when you're talking of your mistress. Understand?

Christine. Mistress?

John. Yes.

Christine. No. I say, I say there——

John. Yes, listen to me. It is much better for you if you do, and don't gabble so much. Miss Julie is your mistress, and you ought to despise yourself for the same reason that you despise her.

Christine. I have always had so much self-respect——

John. That you can despise others.

Christine. That I have never lowered myself below my place. Just say, if you can, that the Count's cook had anything to do with the cattleman or the swineherd. You just try it on!

John. Quite so. You had a little something on with a nice fellow, and very lucky for you, too.

Christine. A nice fellow, to be sure, who sells the Count's oats out of the stable.

John. You're a nice one to talk; you get commissions from the vegetable man and ain't above being squared by the butcher.

Christine. What?

John. And so it's you that can't respect your mistress any more! You—you—I don't think!

Christine. Come along to church now. A good sermon'll do you a lot of good after the way you've been carrying on.

John. No fear, I'm not going to church to-day. You go alone, and confess your own sins.

Christine. Yes, that I will, and I'll come home with forgiveness, and for you too; the Redeemer suffered and died on the cross for all our sins, and if we go to Him with faith and a contrite spirit then He will take all our guilt on Himself.

Julie. Do you believe that, Christine?

Christine. That's my living faith, as true as I stand here, and that's my faith from a child, that I've kept ever since I was young, and where sin overflows there grace overflows as well.

Julie. Ah, if I had your faith! Ah, if——

Christine. Mark you, one can't just go and get it.

Julie. Who gets it, then?

Christine. That's the great secret of grace, Miss, mark you, and God is no respecter of persons, but the first shall be last.

Julie. Yes, but then He is a respecter of persons—the last.

Christine. [*Continues.*] And it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven. Mark you that's what it is, Miss Julie. Well, I'm off—alone, and on the way I'll tell the stable boy not to let out any horses, in case anybody wants to travel, before the Count comes home. Adieu! [*Exit through the glass door.*]

John. What a devil! And all that fuss about a canary.

Julie. [*Limply.*] Leave the canary out of it. Can you see a way out of all this?—an end for the whole thing?

John. [*Ponders.*] No.

Julie. What would you do in my position?

John. In your position? Just wait a minute, will you? As a girl of good birth, as a woman—as a fallen woman? I don't know. Ah! I've got it!

Julie. [*Takes up the razor and makes a movement.*] That?

John. Yes, but I wouldn't do it—note that well; that's the difference between us.

Julie. Because you're a man and I'm a woman? What difference does that make?

John. The same difference—as between men and women.

Julie. [*With the knife in her hand.*] I want to, but I can't do it. My father couldn't do it either—the time when he ought to have.

John. No; he shouldn't have done it—his first duty was to revenge himself.

Julie. And now my mother avenges herself again through me.

John. Have you never loved your father, Miss Julie?

Julie. Yes, infinitely—but I'm sure that I've hated him as well. I must have done it without having noticed it myself, but he brought me up to despise my own sex, to be half a woman and half a man. Who is to blame for what has happened? My father, my mother, I myself? I myself? I haven't got a self at all, I haven't got a thought which I don't get from my father, I haven't got a passion which I don't get from my mother, and the latest phase—the equality of men and women—that I got from my *fiancé,* whom I called a scoundrel for his pains. How then can it be my own fault? To shove the blame on Jesus like Christine does—no, I've got too much pride and too much common sense for that—thanks to my father's teaching. And as for a rich man not being able to get into the kingdom of heaven, that's a lie. Christine has got money in the savings bank. Certainly she won't get in. Who is responsible for the wrong? What does it matter to us who is? I know I've got to put up with the blame and the consequences.

John. Yes—but—— [*There are two loud rings in succession.* JULIE *starts;* JOHN *quickly changes his coat, on the left.*] The Count's at home—just think if Christine—— [*He goes to the speaking tube at the back, whistles, and listens.*]

Julie. He must have already gone to his secretary by now.

John. It's John, my lord. [*He listens. What the Count says is inaudible.*] Yes, my lord. [*He listens.*]

Yes, my lord. At once. [*He listens.*] Very well, my lord. [*He listens.*] Yes, in half-an-hour.

Julie. [*Extremely nervous.*] What did he say? My God! what did he say?

John. He asked for his boots and his coffee in half-an-hour.

Julie. In half-an-hour then. Oh, I'm so tired, I can't do anything; I can't repent, I can't run away, I can't stay, I can't live, I can't die. Help me now! Give me orders and I'll obey like a dog. Do me this last service! Save my honor—save my name! You know what I ought to will, but don't will. Do you will it and order me to accomplish it.

John. I don't know—but now I can't either. I can't make it out myself—it's just as though it were the result of this coat I've just put on, but I can't give you any orders. And now, after the Count has spoken to me, I can't explain it properly—but—ah! it's the livery which I've got on my back. I believe if the Count were to come in now and order me to cut my throat I'd do it on the spot.

Julie. Then just do as though you were he, and I were you. You could imagine it quite well a minute ago, when you were before me on your knees. Then you were a knight. Have you ever been to the theater and seen the mesmerist? [JOHN *makes a gesture of assent.*] He says to the medium, "Take the broom"; he takes it; he says "Sweep," and he sweeps.

John. But in that case the medium must be asleep.

Julie. [*Exalted.*] I am already asleep. The whole room looks as though it were full of smoke—and you look like an iron furnace—which is like a man in black clothes and top hat—and your eyes glow like coals when the fire goes out—and your face is a white blur like cinders. [*The sunlight has now reached the floor and streams over* JOHN.] It's so warm and fine. [*She rubs her hands as*

though she were warming them by a fire.] And then it's so light—and so quiet.

John. [*Takes the razor and puts it in her hand.*] There is the broom; go, now that it's light, outside into the barn—and—— [*He whispers something in her ear.*]

Julie. [*Awake.*] Thank you. Now I'm going to have peace, but tell me now that the first shall have their share of grace too. Tell me that, even though you don't believe it.

John. The first? No, I can't do that; but, one minute, Miss Julie—I've got it, you don't belong any longer to the first—you are beneath the last.

Julie. That's true—I am beneath the very last; I am the last myself. Oh—but now I can't go. Tell me again that I must go.

John. No, I can't do that again now either. I can't.

Julie. And the first shall be last.

John. Don't think, don't think! You rob me of all my strength and make a coward of me. What? I believe the clock was moving. No—shall we put paper in? To be so funky of the sound of a clock! But it's something more than a clock—there's something that sits behind it—a hand puts it in motion, and something else sets the hand in motion—just put your fingers to your ears, and then it strikes worse again. It strikes until you give an answer and then it's too late, and then come the police—and then—— [*Two loud rings in succession.* JOHN *starts, then he pulls himself together.*] It's awful, but there's no other way out. Go! [JULIE *goes with a firm step outside the door.*] [*Curtain.*

THE CREDITOR

CHARACTERS

THEKLA.
ADOLF, her husband, a painter.
GUSTAV, her divorced husband.
TWO LADIES, a WAITER.

THE CREDITOR

SCENE

A small watering place. Time, the present. Stage directions with reference to the actors.

A drawing room in a watering place; furnished as above.

Door in the middle, with a view out on the sea; side doors right and left; by the side door on the left the button of an electric bell; on the right of the door in the center a table, with a decanter of water and a glass. On the left of the door in the center a what-not; on the right a fireplace in front; on the right a round table and armchairs; on the left a sofa, a square table, a settee; on the table a small pedestal with a draped figure—papers, books, armchairs. Only the items of furniture which are introduced into the action are referred to in the above plan. The rest of the scenery remains unaffected. It is summer, and the daytime.

SCENE I

[ADOLF *sits on the settee on the left of the square table; his stick is propped up near him.*]

Adolf. And it's you I've got to thank for all this.

Gustav. [*Walks up and down on the right, smoking a cigar.*] Oh, nonsense.

Adolf. Indeed, I have. Why, the first day after my wife went away, I lay on my sofa like a cripple and gave myself up to my depression; it was as though she had taken my crutches, and I couldn't move from the spot.

A few days went by, and I cheered up and began to pull myself together. The delirious nightmares which my brain had produced, went away. My head became cooler and cooler. A thought which I once had came to the surface again. My desire to work, my impulse to create, woke up. My eye got back again its capacity for sound, sharp observation. You came, old man.

Gustav. Yes, you were in pretty low water, old man, when I came across you, and you went about on crutches. Of course, that doesn't prove that it was simply my presence that helped so much to your recovery; you needed quiet, and you wanted masculine companionship.

Adolf. You're right in that, as you are in everything else you say. I used to have it in the old days. But after my marriage it seemed unnecessary. I was satisfied with the friend of my heart whom I had chosen. All the same I soon got into fresh sets, and made many new acquaintances. But then my wife got jealous. She wanted to have me quite to herself; but much worse than that, my friends wanted to have her quite to themselves—and so I was left out in the cold with my jealousy.

Gustav. You were predisposed to this illness, you know that. [*He passes on the left behind the square table and comes to* ADOLF'S *left.*]

Adolf. I was afraid of losing her—and tried to prevent it. Are you surprised at it? I was never afraid for a moment that she'd be unfaithful to me.

Gustav. What husband ever was afraid?

Adolf. Strange, isn't it? All I troubled about was simply this—about friends getting influence over her and so being able indirectly to acquire power over me—and I couldn't bear that at all.

Gustav. So you and your wife didn't have quite identical views?

Adolf. I've told you so much, you may as well know everything—my wife is an independent character. [GUSTAV *laughs.*] What are you laughing at, old man?

Gustav. Go on, go on. She's an independent character, is she?

Adolf. She won't take anything from me.

Gustav. But she does from everybody else?

Adolf. [*After a pause.*] Yes. And I've felt about all this, that the only reason why my views were so awfully repugnant to her, was because they were mine, not because they appeared absurd on their intrinsic merits. For it often happened that she'd trot out my old ideas, and champion them with gusto as her own. Why, it even came about that one of my friends gave her ideas which he had borrowed direct from me. She found them delightful; she found everything delightful that didn't come from me.

Gustav. In other words, you're not truly happy.

Adolf. Oh, yes, I am. The woman whom I desired is mine, and I never wished for any other.

Gustav. Do you never wish to be free either?

Adolf. I wouldn't like to go quite so far as that. Of course the thought crops up now and again, how calmly I should be able to live if I were free—but she scarcely leaves me before I immediately long for her again, as though she were my arm, my leg. Strange. When I'm alone I sometimes feel as though she didn't have any real self of her own, as though she were a part of my ego, a piece out of my inside, that stole away all my will, all my *joi de vivre*. Why, my very marrow itself, to use an anatomical expression, is situated in her; that's what it seems like.

Gustav. Viewing the matter broadly, that seems quite plausible.

Adolf. Nonsense. An independent person like she is, with such a tremendous lot of personal views, and when I met her, what was I then? Nothing. An artistic child which she brought up.

Gustav. But afterward you developed her intellect and educated her, didn't you?

Adolf. No; her growth remained stationary, and I shot up.

Gustav. Yes; it's really remarkable, but her literary talent already began to deteriorate after her first book, or, to put it as charitably as possible, it didn't develop any further. [*He sits down opposite* ADOLF *on the sofa on the left.*] Of course she then had the most promising subject matter—for of course she drew the portrait of her first husband—you never knew him, old man? He must have been an unmitigated ass.

Adolf. I've never seen him. He was away for more than six months, but the good fellow must have been as perfect an ass as they're made, judging by her description—you can take it from me, old man, that her description wasn't exaggerated.

Gustav. Quite; but why did she marry him?

Adolf. She didn't know him then. People only get to know one another afterward, don't you know.

Gustav. But, according to that, people have no business to marry until—— Well, the man was a tyrant, obviously.

Adolf. Obviously?

Gustav. What husband wouldn't be? [*Casually.*] Why, old chap, you're as much a tyrant as any of the others.

Adolf. Me? I? Why, I allow my wife to come and go as she jolly well pleases!

Gustav. [*Stands up.*] Pah! a lot of good that is. I didn't suppose you kept her locked up. [*He turns round behind the square table and comes over to* ADOLF *on the right.*] Don't you mind if she's out all night?

Adolf. I should think I do.

Gustav. Look here. [*Resuming his earlier tone.*] Speaking as man to man, it simply makes you ridiculous.

Adolf. Ridiculous? Can a man's trusting his wife make him ridiculous?

Gustav. Of course it can. And you've been so for

some time. No doubt about it. [*He walks round the round table on the right.*]

Adolf. [*Excitedly.*] Me? I'd have preferred to be anything but that. I must put matters right.

Gustav. Don't you get so excited, otherwise you'll get an attack again.

Adolf. [*After a pause.*] Why doesn't she look ridiculous when I stay out all night?

Gustav. Why? Don't you bother about that. That's how the matter stands, and while you're fooling about moping, the mischief is done. [*He goes behind the square table, and walks behind the sofa.*]

Adolf. What mischief?

Gustav. Her husband, you know, was a tyrant, and she simply married him in order to be free. For what other way is there for a girl to get free, than by getting the so-called husband to act as cover?

Adolf. Why, of course.

Gustav. And now, old man, you're the cover.

Adolf. I?

Gustav. As her husband.

Adolf. [*Looks absent.*]

Gustav. Am I not right?

Adolf. [*Uneasily.*] I don't know. [*Pause.*] A man lives for years on end with a woman without coming to a clear conclusion about the woman herself, or how she stands in relation to his own way of looking at things. And then all of a sudden a man begins to reflect—and then there's no stopping. Gustav, old man, you're my friend, the only friend I've had for a long time, and this last week you've given me back all my life and pluck. It seems as though you'd radiated your magnetism over me. You were the watchmaker who repaired the works in my brain, and tightened the spring. [*Pause.*] Don't you see yourself how much more lucidly I think, how much more connectedly I speak, and at times it almost

seems as though my voice had got back the timber it used to have in the old days.

Gustav. I think so, too. What can be the cause of it?

Adolf. I don't know. Perhaps one gets accustomed to talk more softly to women. Thekla, at any rate, was always ragging me because I shrieked.

Gustav. And then you subsided into a minor key, and allowed yourself to be put in the corner.

Adolf. Don't say that. [*Reflectively.*] That wasn't the worst of it. Let's talk of something else—where was I then?—I've got it. [GUSTAV *turns round again at the back of the square table and comes to* ADOLF *on his right.*] You came here, old man, and opened my eyes to the mysteries of my art. As a matter of fact, I've been feeling for some time that my interest in painting was lessening, because it didn't provide me with a proper medium to express what I had in me; but when you gave me the reason for this state of affairs, and explained to me why painting could not possibly be the right form for the artistic impulse of the age, then I saw the true light and I recognized that it would be from now onward impossible for me to create in colors.

Gustav. Are you so certain, old man, that you won't be able to paint any more, that you won't have any relapse?

Adolf. Quite. I have tested myself. When I went to bed the evening after our conversation I reviewed your chain of argument point by point, and felt convinced that it was sound. But the next morning, when my head cleared again, after the night's sleep, the thought flashed through me like lightning that you might be mistaken all the same. I jumped up, and snatched up a brush and palette, in order to paint, but—just think of it!—it was all up. I was no longer capable of any illusion. The whole thing was nothing but blobs of color, and I was horrified at the thought I could ever have believed I could convert anyone else to the belief that this painted canvas was

anything else except painted canvas. The scales had fallen from my eyes, and I could as much paint again as I could become a child again.

Gustav. You realized then that the real striving of the age, its aspiration for reality, for actuality, can only find a corresponding medium in sculpture, which gives bodies extension in the three dimensions.

Adolf. [*Hesitating.*] The three dimensions? Yes—in a word, bodies.

Gustav. And now you want to become a sculptor? That means that you were a sculptor really from the beginning; you got off the line somehow, so you only needed a guide to direct you back again to the right track. I say, when you work now, does the great joy of creation come over you?

Adolf. Now, I live again.

Gustav. May I see what you're doing?

Adolf. [*Undraping a figure on the small table.*] A female figure.

Gustav. [*Probing.*] Without a model, and yet so lifelike?

Adolf. [*Heavily.*] Yes, but it is like somebody; extraordinary how this woman is in me, just as I am in her.

Gustav. That last is not so extraordinary—do you know anything about transfusion?

Adolf. Blood transfusion? Yes.

Gustav. It seems to me that you've allowed your veins to be opened a bit too much. The examination of this figure clears up many things which I'd previously only surmised. You loved her infinitely?

Adolf. Yes; so much that I could never tell whether she is I, or I am her; when she laughed I laughed; when she cried I cried, and when—just imagine it—our child came into the world I suffered the same as she did.

Gustav. [*Stepping a little to the right.*] Look here, old chap, I am awfully sorry to have to tell you, but

the symptoms of epilepsy are already manifesting themselves.

Adolf. [*Crushed.*] In me? What makes you say so?

Gustav. Because I watched these symptoms in a younger brother of mine, who eventually died of excess. [*He sits down in the armchair by the circular table.*]

Adolf. How did it manifest itself—that disease, I mean?

[GUSTAV *gesticulates vividly;* ADOLF *watches with strained attention, and involuntarily imitates* GUSTAV'S *gestures.*]

Gustav. A ghastly sight. If you feel at all off color, I'd rather not harrow you by describing the symptoms.

Adolf. [*Nervously.*] Go on; go on.

Gustav. Well, it's like this. Fate had given the youngster for a wife a little innocent, with kiss-curls, dove-like eyes, and a baby face, from which there spoke the pure soul of an angel. In spite of that, the little one managed to appropriate the man's prerogative.

Adolf. What is that?

Gustav. Initiative, of course; and the inevitable result was that the angel came precious near taking him away to heaven. He first had to be on the cross and feel the nails in his flesh.

Adolf. [*Suffocating.*] Tell me, what was it like?

Gustav. [*Slowly.*] There were times when he and I would sit quite quietly by each other and chat, and then—I'd scarcely been speaking a few minutes before his face became ashy white, his limbs were paralyzed, and his thumbs turned in towards the palm of the hand. [*With a gesture.*] Like that! [ADOLF *imitates the gesture.*] And his eyes were shot with blood, and he began to chew, do you see, like this. [*He moves his lips as though chewing;* ADOLF *imitates him again.*] The saliva stuck in his throat; the chest contracted as though it had been compressed by screws on a joiner's bench; there was a flicker in the pupils like gas jets; foam spurted from his mouth,

and he sank gently back in the chair as though he were drowning. Then——

Adolf. [*Hissing.*] Stop!

Gustav. Then—are you unwell?

Adolf. Yes.

Gustav. [*Gets up and fetches a glass of water from the table on the right near the center door.*] Here, drink this, and let's change the subject.

Adolf. [*Drinks, limp.*] Thanks; go on.

Gustav. Good! When he woke up he had no idea what had taken place. [*He takes the glass back to the table.*] He had simply lost consciousness. Hasn't that ever happened to you?

Adolf. Now and again I have attacks of dizziness. The doctor puts it down to anæmia.

Gustav. [*On the right of* ADOLF.] That's just how the thing starts, mark you. Take it from me, you're in danger of contracting epilepsy; if you aren't on your guard, if you don't live a careful and abstemious life, all round.

Adolf. What can I do to effect that?

Gustav. Above all, you must exercise the most complete continence.

Adolf. For how long?

Gustav. Six months at least.

Adolf. I can't do it. It would upset all our life together.

Gustav. Then it's all up with you.

Adolf. I can't do it.

Gustav. You can't save your own life? But tell me, as you've taken me into your confidence so far, haven't you any other wound that hurts you?—some other secret trouble in this multifarious life of ours, with all its numerous opportunities for jars and complications? There is usually more than one *motif* which is responsible for a discord. Haven't you got a skeleton in the cupboard, old chap, which you hide even from yourself? You told

me a minute ago you'd given your child to people to look after. Why didn't you keep it with you? [*He goes behind the square table on the left and then behind the sofa.*]

Adolf. [*Covers the figure on the small table with a cloth.*] It was my wife's wish to have it nursed outside the house.

Gustav. The motive? Don't be afraid.

Adolf. Because when the kid was three years old she thought it began to look like her first husband.

Gustav. Re-a-lly? Ever seen the first husband?

Adolf. No, never. I just once cast a cursory glance over a bad photograph, but I couldn't discover any likeness.

Gustav. Oh, well, photographs are never like, and besides, his type of face may have changed with time. By the by, didn't that make you at all jealous?

Adolf. Not a bit. The child was born a year after our marriage, and the husband was traveling when I met Thekla, here—in this watering place—in this very house. That's why we come here every summer.

Gustav. Then all suspicion on your part was out of the question? But so far as the intrinsic facts of the matter are concerned you needn't be jealous at all, because it not infrequently happens that the children of a widow who marries again are like the deceased husband. Very awkward business, no question about it; and that's why, don't you know, the widows are burned alive in India. Tell me, now, didn't you ever feel jealous of him, of the survival of his memory in your own self? Wouldn't it have rather gone against the grain if he had just met you when you were out for a walk, and, looking straight at Thekla, said "We," instead of "I"? "We."

Adolf. I can't deny that the thought has haunted me.

Gustav. [*Sits down opposite* ADOLF *on the sofa on the left.*] I thought as much, and you'll never get away from it. There are discords in life, you know, which

never get resolved, so you must stuff your ears with wax, and work. Work, get older, and heap up over the coffin a mass of new impressions, and then the corpse will rest in peace.

Adolf. Excuse my interrupting you—but it is extraordinary at times how your way of speaking reminds me of Thekla. You've got a trick, old man, of winking with your right eye as though you were counting, and your gaze has the same power over me as hers has.

Gustav. No, really?

Adolf. And now you pronounce your "No, really?" in the same indifferent tone that she does. "No, really?" is one of her favorite expressions, too, you know.

Gustav. Perhaps there is a distant relationship between us: all men and women are related of course. Anyway, there's no getting away from the strangeness of it, and it will be interesting for me to make the acquaintance of your wife, so as to observe this remarkable characteristic.

Adolf. But just think of this, she doesn't take a single expression from me; why, she seems rather to make a point of avoiding all my special tricks of speech; all the same, I have seen her make use of one of my gestures; but it is quite the usual thing in married life for a husband and a wife to develop the so-called marriage likeness.

Gustav. Quite. But look here now. [*He stands up.*] That woman has never loved you.

Adolf. Nonsense.

Gustav. Pray excuse me, woman's love consists simply in this—in taking in, in receiving. She does not love the man from whom she takes nothing: she has never loved you. [*He turns round behind the square table and walks to* ADOLF'S *right.*]

Adolf. I suppose you don't think that she'd be able to love more than once?

Gustav. No. Once bit, twice shy. After the first

time, one keeps one's eyes open, but you have never been really bitten yet. You be careful of those who have; they're dangerous customers. [*He goes round the circular table on the right.*]

Adolf. What you say jabs a knife into my flesh. I've got a feeling as though something in me were cut through, but I can do nothing to stop it all by myself, and it's as well it should be so, for abscesses will be opened in that way which would otherwise never be able to come to a head. She never loved me? Why did she marry me, then?

Gustav. Tell me first how it came about that she did marry you, and whether she married you or you her?

Adolf. God knows! That's much too hard a question to be answered offhand, and how did it take place?—it took more than a day.

Gustav. Shall I guess? [*He goes behind the round table, toward the left, and sits on the sofa.*]

Adolf. You'll get nothing for your pains.

Gustav. Not so fast! From the insight which you've given me into your own character, and that of your wife, I find it pretty easy to work out the sequence of the whole thing. Listen to me and you'll be quite convinced. [*Dispassionately and in an almost jocular tone.*] The husband happened to be travelling on study and she was alone. At first she found a pleasure in being free. Then she imagined that she felt the void, for I presume that she found it pretty boring after being alone for a fortnight. Then he turned up, and the void begins gradually to be filled—the picture of the absent man begins gradually to fade in comparison, for the simple reason that he is a long way off—you know of course the phychological algebra of distance? And when both of them, alone as they were, felt the awakening of passion, they were frightened of themselves, of him, of their own conscience. They sought for protection, skulked behind the fig-leaf, played at brother and sister, and the more

sensual grew their feelings the more spiritual did they pretend their relationship really was.

Adolf. Brother and sister! How did you know that?

Gustav. I just thought that was how it was. Children play at mother and father, but of course when they grow older they play at brother and sister—so as to conceal what requires concealment; they then discard their chaste desires; they play blind man's buff till they've caught each other in some dark corner, where they're pretty sure not to be seen by anybody. [*With increased severity.*] But they are warned by their inner consciences that an eye sees them through the darkness. They are afraid—and in their panic the absent man begins to haunt their imagination—to assume monstrous proportions—to become metamorphosed—he becomes a nightmare who opposes them in that love's young dream of theirs. He becomes the creditor [*he raps slowly on the table three times with his finger, as though knocking at the door*] who knocks at the door. They see his black hand thrust itself between them when their own are reaching after the dish of pottage. They hear his unwelcome voice in the stillness of the night, which is only broken by the beating of their own pulses. He doesn't prevent their belonging to each other, but he is enough to mar their happiness, and when they have felt this invisible power of his, and when at last they want to run away, and make their futile efforts to escape the memory which haunts them, the guilt which they have left behind, the public opinion which they are afraid of, and they lack the strength to bear their own guilt, then a scapegoat has to be exterminated and slaughtered. They posed as believers in Free Love, but they didn't have the pluck to go straight to him, to speak straight out to him and say, "We love each other." They were cowardly, and that's why the tyrant had to be assassinated. Am I not right?

Adolf. Yes; but you're forgetting that she trained me, gave me new thoughts.

Gustav. I haven't forgotten it. But tell me, how was it that she wasn't able to succeed in educating the other man—in educating him into being really modern?

Adolf. He was an utter ass.

Gustav. Right you are—he was an ass; but that's a fairly elastic word, and according to her description of him, in her novel, his asinine nature seemed to have consisted principally in the fact that he didn't understand her. Excuse the question, but is your wife really as deep as all that? I haven't found anything particularly profound in her writings.

Adolf. Nor have I. I must really own that I too find it takes me all my time to understand her. It's as though the machinery of our brains couldn't catch on to each other properly—as though something in my head got broken when I try to understand her.

Gustav. Perhaps you're an ass as well.

Adolf. No, I flatter myself I'm not that, and I nearly always think that she's in the wrong—and, for the sake of argument, would you care to read this letter which I got from her to-day? [*He takes a letter out of his pocketbook.*]

Gustav. [*Reads it cursorily.*] Hum, I seem to know the style so well.

Adolf. Like a man's, almost.

Gustav. Well, at any rate, I knew a man who had a style like that. [*Standing up.*] I see she goes on calling you brother all the time—do you always keep up the comedy for the benefit of your two selves? Do you still keep on using the fig leaves, even though they're a trifle withered—you don't use any term of endearment?

Adolf. No. In my view, I couldn't respect her quite so much if I did.

Gustav. [*Hands back the letter.*] I see, and she calls

herself "sister" so as to inspire respect. [*He turns round and passes the square table on* ADOLF'S *right.*]

Adolf. I want to esteem her more than I do myself. I want her to be my better self.

Gustav. Oh, you be your better self; though I quite admit it's less convenient than having somebody else to do it for you. Do you want, then, to be your wife's inferior?

Adolf. Yes, I do. I find pleasure in always allowing myself to be beaten by her a little. For instance, I taught her swimming, and it amuses me when she boasts about being better and pluckier than I am. At the beginning I simply pretended to be less skilful and courageous than she was, in order to give her pluck, but one day, God knows how it came about, I was actually the worse swimmer and the one with less pluck. It seemed as though she'd taken all my grit away in real earnest.

Gustav. And haven't you taught her anything else?

Adolf. Yes—but this is in confidence—I taught her spelling, because she didn't know it. Just listen. When she took over the correspondence of the household I gave up writing letters, and—will you believe it?—simply from lack of practice I've lost one bit of grammar after another in the course of the year. But do you think she ever remembers that she has to thank me really for her proficiency? Not for a minute. Of course, I'm the ass now.

Gustav. Ah! really? You're the ass now, are you?

Adolf. I'm only joking, of course.

Gustav. Obviously. But this is pure cannibalism, isn't it? Do you know what I mean? Well, the savages devour their enemies so as to acquire their best qualities. Well, this woman has devoured your soul, your pluck, your knowledge.

Adolf. And my faith. It was I who kept her up to the mark and made her write her first book.

Gustav. [*With facial expression.*] Re-a-lly?

Adolf. It was I who fed her up with praise, even when I thought her work was no good. It was I who introduced her into literary sets, and tried to make her feel herself in clover; defended her against criticism by my personal intervention. I blew courage into her, kept on blowing it for so long that I got out of breath myself. I gave and gave and gave—until nothing was left for me myself. Do you know—I'm going to tell you the whole story—do you know how the thing seems to me now? One's temperament is such an extraordinary thing, and when my artistic successes looked as though they would eclipse her—her prestige—I tried to buck her up by belittling myself and by representing that my art was one that was inferior to hers. I talked so much of the general insignificant rôle of my particular art, and harped on it so much, thought of so many good reasons for my contention, that one fine day I myself was soaked through and through with the worthlessness of the painter's art; so all that was left was a house of cards for you to blow down.

Gustav. Excuse my reminding you of what you said, but at the beginning of our conversation you were asserting that she took nothing from you.

Adolf. She doesn't—now, at any rate; now there is nothing left to take.

Gustav. So the snake has gorged herself, and now she vomits.

Adolf. Perhaps she took more from me than I knew of.

Gustav. Oh, you can reckon on that right enough—she took without your noticing it. [*He goes behind the square table and comes in front of the sofa.*] That's what people call stealing.

Adolf. Then what it comes to is that she hasn't educated me at all?

Gustav. Rather you her. Of course she knew the

trick well enough of making you believe the contrary. Might I ask how she pretended to educate you?

Adolf. Oh—at first—hum!

Gustav. Well? [*He leans his arms on the table.*]

Adolf. Well, I——

Gustav. No; it was she—she.

Adolf. As a matter of fact, I couldn't say which it was.

Gustav. You see.

Adolf. Besides, she destroyed my faith as well, and so I went backward until you came, old chap, and gave me a new faith.

Gustav. [*He laughs.*] In sculpture? [*He turns round by the square table and comes to* ADOLF'S *right.*]

Adolf. [*Hesitating.*] Yes.

Gustav. And you believed in it?—in that abstract, obsolete art from the childhood of the world. Do you believe that by means of pure form and three dimensions —no, you don't really—that you can produce an effect on the real spirit of this age of ours, that you can create illusions without color? Without color, I say. Do you believe that?

Adolf. [*Tonelessly.*] No.

Gustav. Nor do I.

Adolf. But why did you say you did?

Gustav. You make me pity you.

Adolf. Yes, I am indeed to be pitied. And now I'm bankrupt, absolutely—and the worst of it is I haven't got her any more.

Gustav. [*With a few steps toward the right.*] What good would she be to you? She would be what God above was to me before I became an atheist—a subject on which I could lavish my reverence. You keep your feeling of reverence dark, and let something else grow on top of it—a healthy contempt, for instance.

Adolf. I can't live without someone to reverence.

Gustav. Slave! [*He goes round the table on the right.*]

Adolf. And without a woman to reverence, to worship.

Gustav. Oh, the deuce! Then you go back to that God of yours—if you really must have something on which you can crucify yourself; but you call yourself an atheist when you've got the superstitious belief in women in your own blood; you call yourself a free thinker when you can't think freely about a lot of silly women. Do you know what all this illusive quality, this sphinx-like mystery, this profundity in your wife's temperament all really comes to? The whole thing is sheer stupidity; why, the woman can't distinguish between A.B. and a bull's foot for the life of her. And look here, it's something shoddy in the mechanism, that's where the fault lies. Outside it looks like a fifty-guinea hunting watch, open it and you find it's tuppenny-halfpenny gun-metal. [*He comes up to* ADOLF.] Put her in trousers, draw a mustache under her nose with a piece of coal, and then listen to her in the same state of mind, and then you'll be perfectly convinced that it is quite a different kettle of fish altogether—a gramophone which reproduces, with rather less volume, your words and other people's words. Do you know how a woman is constituted? Yes, of course you do. A boy with the breasts of a mother, an immature man, a precocious child whose growth has been stunted, a chronically anæmic creature that has a regular emission of blood thirteen times in the year. What can you do with a thing like that?

Adolf. Yes—but—but then how can I believe—that we are really on an equality?

Gustav. [*Moves away from him again toward the right.*] Sheer hallucination! The fascination of the petticoat. But it is so; perhaps, in fact you have become like each other, the levelling has taken place. But I say.

[*He takes out his watch.*] We've been chatting for quite long enough. Your wife's bound to be here shortly. Wouldn't it be better to leave off now, so that you can rest for a little? [*He comes nearer and holds out his hand to say good-bye.* ADOLF *grips his hand all the tighter.*]

Adolf. No, don't leave me. I haven't got the pluck to be alone.

Gustav. Only for a little while. Your wife will be coming in a minute.

Adolf. Yes, yes—she's coming. [*Pause.*] Strange, isn't it? I long for her and yet I'm frightened of her. She caresses me, she is tender, but her kisses have something in them which smothers one, something which sucks, something which stupefies. It is as though I were the child at the circus whose face the clown is making up in the dressing-room, so that it can appear red-cheeked before the public.

Gustav. [*Leaning on the arm of* ADOLF'S *chair.*] I'm sorry for you, old man. Although I'm not a doctor, I am in a position to tell you that you are a dying man. One has only to look at your last pictures to be quite clear on the point.

Adolf. What do you say—what do you mean?

Gustav. Your coloring is so watery, so consumptive and thin, that the yellow of the canvas shines through. It is just as though your hollow, ashen, white cheeks were looking out at me.

Adolf. Ah!

Gustav. Yes, and that's not only my view. Haven't you read to-day's paper?

Adolf. [*He starts.*] No.

Gustav. It's before you on the table.

Adolf. [*He gropes after the paper without having the courage to take it.*] Is it in here?

Gustav. Read it, or shall I read it to you?

Adolf. No.

Gustav. [*Turns to leave.*] If you prefer it, I'll go.

Adolf. No, no, no! I don't know how it is—I think I am beginning to hate you, but all the same I can't do without your being near me. You have helped to drag me out of the slough which I was in, and, as luck would have it, I just managed to work my way clear and then you knocked me on the head and plunged me in again. As long as I kept my secrets to myself I still had some guts—now I'm empty. There's a picture by an Italian master that describes a torture scene. The entrails are dragged out of a saint by means of a windlass. The martyr lies there and sees himself getting continually thinner and thinner, but the roll on the windlass always gets perpetually fatter, and so it seems to me that you get stronger since you've taken me up and that you're taking away now with you, as you go, my innermost essence, the core of my character, and there's nothing left of me but an empty husk.

Gustav. Oh, what fantastic notions; besides, your wife is coming back with your heart.

Adolf. No; no longer, after you have burnt it for me. You have passed through me, changing everything in your track to ashes—my art, my love, my hope, my faith.

Gustav. [*Comes near to him again.*] Were you so splendidly off before?

Adolf. No, I wasn't, but the situation might have been been saved, now it's too late. Murderer!

Gustav. We've wasted a little time. Now we'll do some sowing in the ashes.

Adolf. I hate you! I curse you!

Gustav. A healthy symptom. You've still got some strength, and now I'll screw up your machinery again. I say. [*He goes behind the square table on the left and comes in front of the sofa.*] Will you listen to me and obey me?

Adolf. Do what you will with me, I'll obey.

Gustav. Look at me.

Adolf. [*Looks him in the face.*] And now you look at me again with that other expression in those eyes of yours, which draws me to you irresistibly.

Gustav. Now listen to me.

Adolf. Yes, but speak of yourself. Don't speak any more of me: it's as though I were wounded, every movement hurts me.

Gustav. Oh, no, there isn't much to say about me, don't you know. I'm a private tutor in dead languages and a widower, that's all. [*He goes in front of the table.*] Hold my hand. [ADOLF *does so.*]

Adolf. What awful strength you must have, it seems as though a fellow were catching hold of an electric battery.

Gustav. And just think, I was once quite as weak as you are. [*Sternly.*] Get up.

Adolf. [*Gets up.*] I am like a child without any bones, and my brain is empty.

Gustav. Take a walk through the room.

Adolf. I can't.

Gustav. You must; if you don't I'll hit you.

Adolf. [*Stands up.*] What do you say?

Gustav. I've told you—I'll hit you.

Adolf. [*Jumps back to the circular table on the right, beside himself.*] You!

Gustav. [*Follows him.*] Bravo! That's driven the blood to your head, and wakened up your self-respect. Now I'll give you an electric shock. Where's your wife?

Adolf. Where's my wife?

Gustav. Yes.

Adolf. At—a meeting.

Gustav. Certain?

Adolf. Absolutely.

Gustav. What kind of a meeting?

Adolf. An orphan association.

Gustav. Did you part friends?

Adolf. [*Hesitating.*] Not friends.

Gustav. Enemies, then? What did you say to make her angry?

Adolf. You're terrible. I'm frightened of you. How did you manage to know that?

Gustav. I've just got three known quantities, and by their help I work out the unknown. What did you say to her, old chap?

Adolf. I said—only two words—but two awful words. I regret them—I regret them.

Gustav. You shouldn't do that. Well, speak!

Adolf. I said, "Old coquette."

Gustav. And what else?

Adolf. I didn't say anything else.

Gustav. Oh yes, you did; you've only forgotten it. Perhaps because you haven't got the pluck to remember it. You've locked it up in a secret pigeonhole; open it.

Adolf. I don't remember.

Gustav. But I know what it was—the sense was roughly this: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself to be always flirting at your age. You're getting too old to find any more admirers."

Adolf. Did I say that—possibly? How did you manage to know it?

Gustav. On my way here I heard her tell the story on the steamer.

Adolf. To whom?

Gustav. [*Walks up and down on the left.*] To four boys, whom she happened to be with. She has a craze for pure boys, just like——

Adolf. A perfectly innocent *penchant.*

Gustav. Quite as innocent as playing brother and sister when one is father and mother.

Adolf. You saw her, then?

Gustav. Yes, of course; but you've never seen her if you didn't see her then—I mean ,if you weren't present —and that's the reason, don't you know, why a husband

can never know his wife. Have you got her photograph?

Adolf. [*Takes a photo out of his pocketbook.*] [*Inquisitively.*] Here you are.

Gustav. [*Takes it.*] Were you present when it was taken?

Adolf. No.

Gustav. Just look at it. Is it like the portrait you painted? No, the features are the same, but the expression is different. But you don't notice that, because you insist on seeing in it the picture of her which you've painted. Now look at this picture as a painter, without thinking of the original. What does it represent? I can see nothing but a tricked-out flirt, playing the decoy. Observe the cynical twist in the mouth, which you never managed to see. You see that her look is seeking a man quite different from you. Observe the dress is *décolleté*, the coiffure titivated to the last degree, the sleeves finish high up. You see?

Adolf. Yes, now I see.

Gustav. Be careful, my boy.

Adolf. Of what?

Gustav. [*Gives him back the portrait.*] Of her revenge. Don't forget that by saying she was no longer attractive to men you wounded her in the one thing which she took most seriously. If you'd called her literary works twaddle she'd have laughed, and pitied your bad taste, but now—take it from me—if she hasn't avenged herself already, it's not her fault.

Adolf. I must be clear on that point. [*He goes over to* GUSTAV, *and sits down in his previous place.* GUSTAV *approaches him.*]

Gustav. Find out yourself.

Adolf. Find out myself?

Gustav. Investigate. I'll help you, if you like.

Adolf. [*After a pause.*] Good. Since I've been condemned to death once—so be it—sooner or later it's all the same what's to happen.

Gustav. One question first. Hasn't your wife got just one weak point?

Adolf. Not that I know of. [ADOLF *goes to the open door in the center.*] Yes. You can hear the steamer in the Sound now—she'll be here soon. And I must go down to meet her.

Gustav. [*Holding him back.*] No, stay here. Be rude to her. If she's got a good conscience she'll let you have it so hot and strong that you won't know where you are. But if she feels guilty she'll come and caress you.

Adolf. Are you so sure of it?

Gustav. Not absolutely. At times a hare goes back in its tracks, but I'm not going to let this one escape me. My room is just here. [*Points to the door on the right and goes behind* ADOLF'S *chair.*] I'll keep this position, and be on the lookout, while you play your game here, and when you've played it to the end we'll exchange parts. I'll go in the cage and leave myself to the tender mercies of the snake, and you can stand at the keyhole. Afterward we'll meet in the park and compare notes. But pull yourself together, old man, and if you show weakness I'll knock on the floor twice with a chair.

Adolf. [*Getting up.*] Right. But don't go away: I must know that you're in the next room.

Gustav. You can trust me for that. But be careful you aren't afraid when you see later on how I can dissect a human soul and lay the entrails here on the table. It may seem a bit uncanny to beginners, but if you've seen it done once you don't regret it. One thing more, don't say a word that you've met me, or that you have made any acquaintance during her absence—not a word. I'll ferret out her weak point myself. Hush! She's already up there in her room. She's whistling—then she's in a temper. Now stick to it. [*He points to the left.*] And sit here on this chair, then she'll have to sit there

[*he points to the sofa on the left*], and I can keep you both in view at the same time.

Adolf. We've still got an hour before dinner. There are no new visitors, for there has been no bell to announce them. We'll be alone together—more's the pity!

Gustav. You seem pretty limp. Are you unwell?

Adolf. I'm all right; unless, you know, I'm frightened of what's going to happen. But I can't help its happening. The stone rolls, but it was not the last drop of water that made it roll, nor yet the first—everything taken together brought it about.

Gustav. Let it roll, then; it won't have any peace until it does. Good-bye, for the time being.

[*Exit on the right.* ADOLF *nods to him, stands up for a short time, looking at the photograph, tears it to pieces, and throws the fragments behind the circular table on the right; he then sits down in his previous place, nervously arranges his tie, runs his fingers through his hair, fumbles with the lapels of his coat, etc.* THEKLA *enters on the left.*]

SCENE II

Thekla. [*Frank, cheerful and engaging, goes straight up to her husband and kisses him.*] Good-day, little brother; how have you been getting on? [*She stands on his left.*]

Adolf. [*Half overcome but jocularly resisting.*] What mischief have you been up to, for you to kiss me?

Thekla. Yes, let me just confess. Something very naughty—I've spent an awful lot of money.

Adolf. Did you have a good time, then?

Thekla. Excellent. [*She goes to his right.*] But not at the Congress. It was as dull as ditch-water, don't you know. But how has little brother been passing the time, when his little dove had flown away? [*She looks round the room, as though looking for somebody or scenting*

something, and thus comes behind the sofa on the left.]

Adolf. Oh, the time seemed awfully long.

Thekla. Nobody to visit you?

Adolf. Not a soul. [THEKLA *looks him up and down and sits down on the sofa.*]

Thekla. Who sat here?

Adolf. Here? No one.

Thekla. Strange! The sofa is as warm as anything, and there's the mark of an elbow in the cushion. Have you had a lady visitor? [*She stands up.*]

Adolf. Me? You're not serious.

Thekla. [*Turns away from the square table and comes to* ADOLF'S *right.*] How he blushes! So the little brother wants to mystify me a bit, does he? Well, let him come here and confess what he's got on his conscience to his little wife. [*She draws him to her.* ADOLF *lets his head sink on her breast; laughing.*]

Adolf. You're a regular devil, do you know that?

Thekla. No, I know myself so little.

Adolf. Do you never think about yourself?

Thekla. [*Looking in the air, while she looks at him searchingly.*] About myself? I only think about myself. I am a shocking egoist, but how philosophical you've become, my dear.

Adolf. Put your hand on my forehead.

Thekla. [*Playfully.*] Has he got bees in his bonnet again? Shall I drive them away? [*She kisses him on the forehead.*] There, it's all right now? [*Pause, moving away from him to the right.*] Now let me hear what he's been doing to amuse himself. Painted anything pretty?

Adolf. No; I've given up painting.

Thekla. What, you've given up painting!

Adolf. Yes, but don't scold me about it. How could I help it if I wasn't able to paint any more?

Thekla. What are you going to take up then?

Adolf. I'm going to be a sculptor. [THEKLA *passes over in front of the square table and in front of the sofa.*] Yes, but don't blame me—just look at this figure.

Thekla. [*Undrapes the figure on the table.*] Hello, I say! Who's this meant to be?

Adolf. Guess!

Thekla. [*Tenderly.*] Is it meant to be his little wife? And he isn't ashamed of it, is he?

Adolf. Hasn't he hit the mark?

Thekla. How can I tell?—the face is lacking. [*She drapes the figure.*]

Adolf. Quite so—but all the rest? Nice?

Thekla. [*Taps him caressingly on the cheek.*] Will he shut up? Otherwise I'll kiss him. [*She goes behind him;* ADOLF *defending himself.*]

Adolf. Look out, look out, anybody might come.

Thekla. [*Nestling close to him.*] What do I care! I'm surely allowed to kiss my own husband. That's only my legal right.

Adolf. Quite so; but do you know the people here in the hotel take the view that we're not married because we kiss each other so much, and our occasional quarrelling makes them all the more cocksure about it, because lovers usually carry on like that.

Thekla. But need there be any quarrels? Can't he always be as sweet and good as he is at present? Let him tell me. Wouldn't he like it himself? Wouldn't he like us to be happy?

Adolf. I should like it, but——

Thekla. [*With a step to the right.*] Who put it into his head not to paint any more?

Adolf. You're always scenting somebody behind me and my thoughts. You're jealous.

Thekla. I certainly am. I was always afraid someone might estrange you from me.

Adolf. You're afraid of that, you say, though you

know very well that there isn't a woman living who can supplant you—that I can't live without you.

Thekla. I wasn't frightened the least bit of females. It was your friends I was afraid of: they put all kinds of ideas into your head.

Adolf. [*Probing.*] So you were afraid? What were you afraid of?

Thekla. Someone has been here. Who was it?

Adolf. Can't you stand my looking at you?

Thekla. Not in that way. You aren't accustomed to look at me like that.

Adolf. How am I looking at you then?

Thekla. You are spying underneath your eyelids.

Adolf. Right through. Yes, I want to know what it's like inside.

Thekla. I don't mind. As you like. I've nothing to hide, but—your very manner of speaking has changed—you employ expressions. [*Probing.*] You philosophize. Eh? [*She goes toward him in a menacing manner.*] Who has been here?

Adolf. My doctor—nobody else.

Thekla. Your doctor! What doctor?

Adolf. The doctor from Strömastad.

Thekla. What's his name?

Adolf. Sjöberg.

Thekla. What did he say?

Adolf. Well—he said, among other things—that I'm pretty near getting epilepsy.

Thekla. [*With a step to the right.*] Among other things! What else did he say?

Adolf. Oh, something extremely unpleasant.

Thekla. Let me hear it.

Adolf. He forbade us to live together as man and wife for some time.

Thekla. There you are. I thought as much. They want to separate us. I've already noticed it for some

time. [*She goes round the circular table toward the right.*]

Adolf. There was nothing for you to notice. There was never the slightest incident of that description.

Thekla. What do you mean?

Adolf. How could it have been possible for you to have seen something which wasn't there if your fear hadn't heated your imagination to so violent a pitch that you saw what never existed? As a matter of fact, what were you afraid of? That I might borrow another's eyes so as to see you as you really were, not as you appeared to me?

Thekla. Keep your imagination in check, Adolf. Imagination is the beast in the human soul.

Adolf. Where did you get this wisdom from? From the pure youths on the steamer, eh?

Thekla. [*Without losing her self-possession.*] Certainly—even youth can teach one a great deal.

Adolf. You seem for once in a way, to be awfully keen on youth?

Thekla. [*Standing by the door in the center.*] I have always been so, and that's how it came about that I loved you. Any objection?

Adolf. Not at all. But I should very much prefer to be the only one.

Thekla. [*Coming forward on his right, and joking as though speaking to a child.*] Let the little brother look here. I've got such a large heart that there is room in it for a great many, not only for him.

Adolf. But little brother doesn't want to know anything about the other brothers.

Thekla. Won't he just come here and let himself be teased by his little woman, because he's jealous—no, envious is the right word. [*Two knocks with a chair are heard from the room on the right.*]

Adolf. No, I don't want to fool about, I want to speak seriously.

Thekla. [*As though speaking to a child.*] Good Lord! he wants to speak seriously. Upon my word! Has the man become serious for once in his life? [*Comes on his left, takes hold of his head and kisses him.*] Won't he laugh now a little? [ADOLF *laughs.*]

Thekla. There, there!

Adolf. [*Laughs involuntarily.*] You damned witch, you! I really believe you can bewitch people.

Thekla. [*Comes in front of the sofa.*] He can see for himself, and that's why he mustn't worry me, otherwise I shall certainly bewitch him.

Adolf. [*Springs up.*] Thekla! Sit for me a minute in profile, and I'll do the face for your figure.

Thekla. With pleasure. [*She turns her profile toward him.*]

Adolf. [*Sits down, fixes her with his eyes and acts as though he were modelling.*] Now, don't think of me, think of somebody else.

Thekla. I'll think of my last conquest.

Adolf. The pure youth?

Thekla. Quite right. He had the duckiest, sweetest little mustache, and cheeks like cherries, so delicate and soft, one could have bitten right into them.

Adolf. [*Depressed.*] Just keep that twist in your mouth.

Thekla. What twist?

Adolf. That cynical, insolent twist which I've never seen before.

Thekla. [*Makes a grimace.*] Like that?

Adolf. Quite. [*He gets up.*] Do you know how Bret Harte describes the adulteress?

Thekla. [*Laughs.*] No, I've never read that Bret What-do-you-call-him.

Adolf. Oh! she's a pale woman who never blushes.

Thekla. Never? Oh yes, she does; oh yes, she does. Perhaps when she meets her lover, even though her husband and Mr. Bret didn't manage to see anything of it.

Adolf. Are you so certain about it?

Thekla. [*As before.*] Absolutely. If the man isn't able to drive her very blood to her head, how can he possibly enjoy the pretty spectacle? [*She passes by him toward the right.*]

Adolf. [*Raving.*] Thekla! Thekla!

Thekla. Little fool!

Adolf. [*Sternly.*] Thekla!

Thekla. Let him call me his own dear little sweetheart, and I'll get red all over before him, shall I?

Adolf. [*Disarmed.*] I'm so angry with you, you monster, that I should like to bite you. [*He comes nearer to her.*]

Thekla. [*Playing with him.*] Well, come and bite me; come. [*She holds out her arms toward him.*]

Adolf. [*Takes her by the neck and kisses her.*] Yes, my dear, I'll bite you so that you die.

Thekla. [*Joking.*] Look out, somebody might come. [*She goes to the fireplace on the right and leans on the chimneypiece.*]

Adolf. Oh, what do I care if they do? I don't care about anything in the whole world so long as I have you.

Thekla. And if you don't have me any more?

Adolf. [*Sinks down on the chair on the left in front of the circular table.*] Then I die!

Thekla. All right, you needn't be frightened of that the least bit: I'm already much too old, you see, for anybody to like me.

Adolf. You haven't forgotten those words of mine?—I take them back.

Thekla. Can you explain to me why it is that you're so jealous, and at the same time so sure of yourself?

Adolf. No, I can't explain it, but it may be that the thought that another man has possessed you, gnaws and consumes me. It seems to me at times as though our whole love were a figment of the brain—a passion that had turned into a formal matter of honor. I know

nothing which would be more intolerable for me to bear, than for him to have the satisfaction of making me unhappy. Ah, I've never seen him, but the very thought that there is such a man who watches in secret for my unhappiness, who conjures down on me the curse of heaven day by day, who would laugh and gloat over my fall—the very idea of the thing lies like a nightmare on my breast, drives me to you, holds me spellbound, cripples me.

Thekla. [*Goes behind the circular table and comes on* ADOLF'S *right.*] Do you think I should like to give him that satisfaction, that I should like to make his prophecy come true?

Adolf. No, I won't believe that of you.

Thekla. Then if that's so, why aren't you easy on the subject?

Adolf. It's your flirtations which keep me in a chronic state of agitation. Why do you go on playing that game?

Thekla. It's no game. I want to be liked, that's all.

Adolf. Quite so; but only liked by men.

Thekla. Of course. Do you suggest it would be possible for one of us women to get herself liked by other women?

Adolf. I say. [*Pause.*] Haven't you heard recently —from him?

Thekla. Not for the last six months.

Adolf. Do you never think of him?

Thekla. [*After a pause, quickly and tonelessly.*] No. [*With a step toward the left.*] Since the death of the child there is no longer any tie between us. [*Pause.*]

Adolf. And you never see him in the street?

Thekla. No; he must have buried himself somewhere on the west coast. But why do you harp on that subject just now?

Adolf. I don't know. When I was so alone these last

few days, it just occurred to me what he must have felt like when he was left stranded.

Thekla. I believe you've got pangs of conscience.

Adolf. Yes.

Thekla. You think you're a thief, don't you?

Adolf. Pretty near.

Thekla. All right. You steal women like you steal children or fowl. You regard me to some extent like his real or personal property. Much obliged.

Adolf. No; I regard you as his wife, and that's more than property; it can't be made up in damages.

Thekla. Oh yes, it can. If you happen to hear one fine day that he has married again, these whims and fancies of yours will disappear. [*She comes over to him.*] Haven't you made up for him to me?

Adolf. Have I?—and did you use to love him in those days?

Thekla. [*Goes behind him to the fireplace on the right.*] Of course I loved him—certainly.

Adolf. And afterward?

Thekla. I got tired of him.

Adolf. And just think, if you get tired of me in the same way?

Thekla. That will never be.

Adolf. But suppose another man came along with all the qualities that you want in a man? Assume the hypothesis, wouldn't you leave me in that case?

Thekla. No.

Adolf. If he riveted you to him so strongly that you couldn't be parted from him, then of course you'd give me up?

Thekla. No; I have never yet said anything like that.

Adolf. But you can't love two people at the same time?

Thekla. Oh, yes. Why not?

Adolf. I can't understand it.

Thekla. Is anything then impossible simply because

you can't understand it? All men are not made on the same lines, you know.

Adolf. [*Getting up a few steps to the left.*] I am now beginning to understand.

Thekla. No, really?

Adolf. [*Sits down in his previous place by the square table.*] No, really? [*Pause, during which he appears to be making an effort to remember something, but without success.*] Thekla, do you know that your frankness is beginning to be positively agonizing? [THEKLA *moves away from him behind the square table and goes behind the sofa on the left.*] Haven't you told me, times out of number, that frankness is the most beautiful virtue you know, and that I must spend all my time in acquiring it? But it seems to me you take cover behind your frankness.

Thekla. Those are the new tactics, don't you see.

Adolf. [*After a pause.*] I don't know how it is, but this place begins to feel uncanny. If you don't mind, we'll travel home this very night.

Thekla. What an idea you've got into your head again. I've just arrived, and I've no wish to travel off again. [*She sits down on the sofa on the left.*]

Adolf. But if I want it?

Thekla. Nonsense! What do I care what you want? Travel alone.

Adolf. [*Seriously.*] I now order you to travel with me by the next steamer.

Thekla. Order? What do you mean by that?

Adolf. Do you forget that you're my wife?

Thekla. [*Getting up.*] Do you forget that you're my husband?

Adolf. [*Following her example.*] That's just the difference between one sex and the other.

Thekla. That's right, speak in that tone—you have never loved me. [*She goes past him to the right up to the fireplace.*]

Adolf. Really?

Thekla. No, for loving means giving.

Adolf. For a man to love means giving, for a woman to love means taking—and I've given, given, given.

Thekla. Oh, to be sure, you've given a fine lot, haven't you?

Adolf. Everything.

Thekla. [*Leans on the chimneypiece.*] There has been a great deal besides that. And even if you did give me everything, I accepted it. What do you mean by coming now and handing the bill for your presents? If I did take them, I proved to you by that very fact that I loved you. [*She approaches him.*] A girl only takes presents from her lover.

Adolf. From her lover, I agree. There you spoke the truth. [*With a step to the left.*] I was just your lover, but never your husband.

Thekla. A man ought to be jolly grateful when he's spared the necessity of playing cover, but if you aren't satisfied with the position you can have your *congé*. I don't like a husband.

Adolf. No, I noticed as much, for when I remarked, some time back, that you wanted to sneak away from me, and get a set of your own, so as to be able to deck yourself out with my feathers, to scintillate with my jewels, I wanted to remind you of your guilt. And then I changed from your point of view into that inconvenient creditor, whom a woman would particularly prefer to keep at a safe distance from one, and then you would have liked to have cancelled the debt, and to avoid getting any more into my debt; you ceased to pilfer my coffers and transferred your attentions to others. I was your husband without having wished it, and your hate began to arise; but now I'm going to be your husband, whether you want it or not. I can't be your lover any more, that's certain! [*He sits down in his previous place on the right.*]

Thekla. [*Half joking, she moves away behind the table and goes behind the sofa.*] Don't talk such nonsense.

Adolf. You be careful! It's a dangerous game, to consider everyone else an ass and only oneself smart.

Thekla. Everybody does that more or less.

Adolf. And I'm just beginning to suspect that that husband of yours wasn't such an ass after all.

Thekla. Good God! I really believe you're beginning to have sympathy—for him?

Adolf. Yes, almost.

Thekla. Well, look here. Wouldn't you like to make his acquaintance, so as to pour out your heart to him if you want to? What a charming picture! But I, too, begin to feel myself drawn to him somehow. I'm tired of being the nurse of a baby like you. [*She goes a few steps forward and passes by* ADOLF *on the right.*] He at any rate was a man, even though he did make the mistake of being my husband.

Adolf. Hush, hush! But don't talk so loud, we might be heard.

Thekla. What does it matter, so long as we're taken for man and wife?

Adolf. So this is what it comes to, then? You are now beginning to be keen both on manly men and pure boys.

Thekla. There are no limits to my keenness, as you see. And my heart is open to the whole world, great and small, beautiful and ugly. I love the whole world.

Adolf. [*Standing up.*] Do you know what that means?

Thekla. No, I don't know, I only feel.

Adolf. It means that old age has arrived.

Thekla. Are you starting on that again now? Take care!

Adolf. You take care!

Thekla. What of?

Adolf. Of this knife. [*Goes toward her.*]

Thekla. [*Flippantly.*] Little brother shouldn't play with such dangerous toys. [*She passes by him behind the sofa.*]

Adolf. I'm not playing any longer.

Thekla. [*Leaning on the arm of the sofa.*] Really, he's serious, is he, quite serious? Then I'll jolly well show you—that you made a mistake. I mean—you'll never see it yourself, you'll never know it. The whole world will be up to it, but you jolly well won't, you'll have suspicions and surmises and you won't enjoy a single hour of peace. You will have the consciousness of being ridiculous and of being deceived, but you'll never have proofs in your hand, because a husband never manages to get them. [*She makes a few steps to the right in front of him and toward him.*] That will teach you to know me.

Adolf. [*Sits down in his previous place by the table on the left.*] You hate me?

Thekla. No, I don't hate you, nor do I think that I could ever get to hate you. Simply because you're a child.

Adolf. Listen to me! Just think of the time when the storm broke over us. [*Standing up.*] You lay there like a new-born child and shrieked; you caught hold of my knees and I had to kiss your eyes to sleep. Then I was your nurse, and I had to be careful that you didn't go out into the street without doing your hair. I had to send your boots to the shoemaker. I had to take care there was something in the larder. I had to sit by your side and hold your hand in mine by the hour, for you were frightened, frightened of the whole world, deserted by your friends, crushed by public opinion. I had to cheer you up till my tongue stuck to my palate and my head ached; I had to pose as a strong man, and compel myself to believe in the future, until at length I succeeded in breathing life into you while

you lay there like the dead. Then it was me you admired, then it was I who was the man; not an athlete like the man you deserted, but the man of psychic strength, the man of magnetism, who transferred his moral force into your enervated muscles and filled your empty brain with new electricity. And then I put you on your feet again, got a small court for you, whom I jockeyed into admiring you as a sheer matter of friendship to myself, and I made you mistress over me and my home. I painted you in my finest pictures, in rose and azure on a ground of gold, and there was no exhibition in which you didn't have the place of honor. At one moment you were called St. Cecilia, then you were Mary Stuart, Karm Mansdotter, Ebba Brahe, and so I succeeded in awakening and stimulating your interests and so I compelled the yelping rabble to look at you with my own dazzled eyes. I impressed your personality on them by sheer force. I compelled them until you had won their overwhelming sympathy—so that at last you have the free *entrée*. And when I had created you in this way it was all up with my own strength—I broke down, exhausted by the strain. [*He sits down in his previous place.* THEKLA *turns toward the fireplace on the right.*] I had lifted you up, but at the same time I brought myself down; I fell ill; and my illness began to bore you, just because things were beginning to look a bit rosy for you—and then it seemed to me many times as though some secret desire were driving you to get away from your creditor and accomplice. Your love became that of a superior sister, and through want of a better part I fell into the habit of the new rôle of the little brother. Your tenderness remained the same as ever, in fact, it has rather increased, but it is tinged with a grain of pity which is counterbalanced by a strong dose of contempt, and that will increase until it becomes contempt, even as my genius is on the wane and your star is in the ascendant. It seems, too, as

though your source were likely to dry up, when I leave off feeding it, or, rather, as soon as you show that you don't want to draw your inspiration from me any longer. And so we both go down, but you need somebody you can put in your pocket, somebody new, for you are weak and incapable of carrying any moral burden yourself. So I became the scapegoat to be slaughtered alive, but all the same we had become like twins in the course of years, and when you cut through the thread of my longing, you little thought that you were throttling your own self. You are a branch from my tree, and you wanted to cut yourself free from your parent stem before it had struck roots, but you are unable to flourish on your own, and the tree in its turn couldn't do without its chief branch, and so both perish.

Thekla. Do you mean, by all that, that you've written my books?

Adolf. No; you say that so as to provoke me into a lie. I don't express myself so crudely as you, and I've just spoken for five minutes on end simply so as to reproduce all the nuances, all the half-tones, all the transitions, but your barrel organ has only one key.

Thekla. [*Walking up and down on the right.*] Yes, yes; but the gist of the whole thing is that you've written my books.

Adolf. No, there's no gist. You can't resolve a symphony into one key; you can't translate a multifarious life into a single cipher. I never said anything so crass as that I'd written your books.

Thekla. But you meant it all the same.

Adolf. [*Furious.*] I never meant it.

Thekla. But the result——

Adolf. [*Wildly.*] There's no result if one doesn't add. There is a quotient, a long infinitesimal figure of a quotient, but I didn't add.

Thekla. You didn't, but I can.

Adolf. I quite believe you, but I never did.

Thekla. But you wanted to.

Adolf. [*Exhausted, shutting his eyes.*] No, no, no—don't speak to me any more, I'm getting convulsions—be quiet, go away! You're flaying my brain with your brutal pincers—you're thrusting your claws into my thoughts and tearing them. [*He loses consciousness, stares in front of him and turns his thumbs inward.*]

Thekla. [*Tenderly coming toward him.*] What is it, dear? Are you ill? [ADOLF *beats around him.* THEKLA *takes her handkerchief, pours water on to it out of the bottle on the table right of the center door, and cools his forehead with it.*] Adolf!

Adolf. [*He shakes his head.*] Yes.

Thekla. Do you see now that you were wrong?

Adolf. [*After a pause.*] Yes, yes, yes—I see it.

Thekla. And you ask me to forgive you?

Adolf. Yes, yes, yes—I ask you to forgive me; but don't talk right into my brain any more.

Thekla. Now kiss my hand.

Adolf. I'll kiss your hand, if only you won't speak to me any more.

Thekla. And now you'll go out and get some fresh air before dinner.

Adolf. [*Getting up.*] Yes, that will do me good, and afterward we'll pack up and go away.

Thekla. No. [*She moves away from him up to the fireplace on the right.*]

Adolf. Why not? You must have some reason.

Thekla. The simple reason that I've arranged to be at the reception this evening.

Adolf. That's it, is it?

Thekla. That's it right enough. I've promised to be there.

Adolf. Promised? You probably said that you'd try to come; it doesn't prevent you from explaining that you have given up your intention.

Thekla. No, I'm not like you: my word is binding on me.

Adolf. One's word can be binding without one being obliged to respect every casual thing one lets fall in conversation; or did somebody make you promise that you'd go? In that case, you can ask him to release you because your husband is ill.

Thekla. No, I've no inclination to do so. And, besides, you're not so ill that you can't quite well come along too.

Adolf. Why must I always come along too? Does it contribute to your greater serenity?

Thekla. I don't understand what you mean.

Adolf. That's what you always say when you know I mean something which you don't like.

Thekla. Re-a-lly? And why shouldn't I like it?

Adolf. Stop! stop! Don't start all over again—good-bye for the present—I'll be back soon; I hope that in the meanwhile you'll have thought better of it. [*Exit through the central door and then toward the right.* THEKLA *accompanies him to the back of the stage.* GUSTAV *enters, after a pause, from the right.*]

SCENE III

[GUSTAV *goes straight up to the table on the left and takes up a paper without apparently seeing* THEKLA.]

Thekla. [*Starts, then controls herself.*] You? [*She comes forward.*]

Gustav. It's me—excuse me.

Thekla. [*On his left.*] Where do you come from?

Gustav. I came by the highroad, but—I won't stay on here after seeing that——

Thekla. Oh, you stay—— Well, it's a long time.

Gustav. You're right, a very long time.

Thekla. You've altered a great deal, Gustav.

Gustav. But you, on the other hand, my dear Thekla, are still quite as fascinating as ever—almost younger, in fact. Please forgive me. I wouldn't for anything disturb your happiness by my presence. If I'd known that you were staying here I would never have——

Thekla. Please—please, stay. It may be that you find it painful.

Gustav. It's all right so far as I'm concerned. I only thought—that whatever I said I should always have to run the risk of wounding you.

Thekla. [*Passes in front of him toward the right.*] Sit down for a moment, Gustav; you don't wound me, because you have the unusual gift—which always distinguished you—of being subtle and tactful.

Gustav. You're too kind; but how on earth can one tell if—your husband would regard me in the same light that you do?

Thekla. Quite the contrary. Why, he's just been expressing himself with the utmost sympathy with regard to you.

Gustav. Ah! Yes, everything dies away, even the names which we cut on the tree's bark—not even malice can persist for long in these temperaments of ours.

Thekla. He's never entertained malice against you—why, he doesn't know you at all—and, so far as I'm concerned, I always entertained the silent hope that I would live to see the time in which you would approach each other as friends—or at least meet each other in my presence, shake hands, and part.

Gustav. It was also my secret desire to see the woman whom I loved more than my life in really good hands, and, as a matter of fact, I've only heard the very best account of him, while I know all his work as well. All the same, I felt the need of pressing his hand before I grew old, looking him in the face, and asking him to preserve the treasure which providence had entrusted to him, and at the same time I wanted to extinguish the

hate which was burning inside me, quite against my will, and I longed to find peace of soul and resignation, so as to be able to finish in quiet that dismal portion of my life which is still left me.

Thekla. Your words come straight from your heart; you have understood me, Gustav—thanks. [*She holds out her hand.*]

Gustav. Ah, I'm a petty man. Too insignificant to allow of you thriving in my shadow. Your temperament, with its thirst for freedom, could not be satisfied by my monotonous life, the slavish routine to which I was condemned, the narrow circle in which I had to move. I appreciate that, but you understand well enough —you who are such an expert psychologist—what a struggle it must have cost me to acknowledge that to myself.

Thekla. How noble, how great to acknowledge one's weakness so frankly—it's not all men who can bring themselves to that point. [*She sighs.*] But you are always an honest character, straight and reliable—which I knew how to respect—but——

Gustav. I wasn't—not then, but suffering purges, care ennobles, and—and—I have suffered.

Thekla. [*Comes nearer to him.*] Poor Gustav, can you forgive me, can you? Tell me.

Gustav. Forgive? What? It is I who have to ask you for forgiveness.

Thekla. [*Striking another key.*] I do believe that we're both crying—though we're neither of us chickens.

Gustav. [*Softly sliding into another tone.*] Chickens, indeed! I'm an old man, but you—you're getting younger every day.

Thekla. Do you mean it?

Gustav. And how well you know how to dress!

Thekla. It was you and no one else who taught me that. Do you still remember finding out my special colors?

Gustav. No.

Thekla. It was quite simple, don't you remember? Come, I still remember distinctly how angry you used to be with me if I ever had anything else except pink.

Gustav. I angry with you? I was never angry with you.

Thekla. Oh yes, you were, when you wanted to teach me how to think. Don't you remember? And I wasn't able to catch on.

Gustav. Not able to think? Everybody can think, and now you're developing a quite extraordinary power of penetration—at any rate, in your writings.

Thekla. [*Disagreeably affected; tries to change the subject quickly.*] Yes, Gustav dear, I was really awfully glad to see you again, especially under circumstances so unemotional.

Gustav. Well, you can't say, at any rate, that I was such a cantankerous cuss: taking it all round, you had a pretty quiet time of it with me.

Thekla. Yes; if anything, too quiet.

Gustav. Really? But I thought, don't you see, that you wanted me to be quiet and nothing else. Judging by your expressions of opinion as a bride, I had to come to that assumption.

Thekla. How could a woman know then what she really wanted? Besides, mother had always drilled into me to make the best of myself.

Gustav. Well, and that's why it is that you're going as strong as possible. There's such a lot always doing in artist life—your husband isn't exactly a home-bird.

Thekla. But even so, one can have too much of a good thing.

Gustav. [*Suddenly changing his tone.*] Why, I do believe you're still wearing my earrings.

Thekla. [*Embarrassed.*] Yes, why shouldn't I? We're not enemies, you know—and then I thought I would wear them as a symbol that we're not enemies—besides,

you know that earrings like this aren't to be had any more. [*She takes one off.*]

Gustav. Well, so far so good; but what does your husband say on the point?

Thekla. Why should I ask him?

Gustav. You don't ask him? But that's rubbing it in a bit too much—it could quite well make him look ridiculous.

Thekla. [*Simply—in an undertone.*] If it only weren't so pretty. [*She has some trouble in adjusting the earring.*]

Gustav. [*Who has noticed it.*] Perhaps you will allow me to help you?

Thekla. Oh, if you would be so kind.

Gustav. [*Presses it into the ear.*] Little ear! I say, dear, supposing your husband saw us now.

Thekla. Then there'd be a scene.

Gustav. Is he jealous, then?

Thekla. I should think he is—rather! [*Noise in the room on the right.*]

Gustav. [*Passes in front of her toward the right.*] Whose room is that?

Thekla. [*Stepping a little toward the left.*] I don't know—tell me how you are now, and what you're doing. [*She goes to the table on the left.*]

Gustav. You tell me how you are. [*He goes behind the square table on the left, over to the sofa.* THEKLA, *embarrassed, takes the cloth off the figure absent-mindedly.*] No! who is that? Why—it's you!

Thekla. I don't think so.

Gustav. But it looks like you.

Thekla. [*Cynically.*] You think so?

Gustav. [*Sits down on the sofa.*] It reminds one of the anecdote: "How could your Majesty say that?"

Thekla. [*Laughs loudly and sits down opposite him on the settee.*] What foolish ideas you do get into your

head. Have you got by any chance some new yarns?

Gustav. No; but you must know some.

Thekla. I don't get a chance any more now of hearing anything which is really funny.

Gustav. Is he as prudish as all that?

Thekla. Rather!

Gustav. Never different?

Thekla. He's been so ill lately. [*Both stand up.*]

Gustav. Well, who told little brother to walk into somebody else's wasp's nest?

Thekla. [*Laughs.*] Foolish fellow, you!

Gustav. Poor child! do you still remember that once, shortly after our engagement, we lived in this very room, eh? But then it was furnished differently, there was a secretary, for instance, here, by the pillar, and the bed [*with delicacy*] was here.

Thekla. Hush!

Gustav. Look at me!

Thekla. If you would like me to. [*They keep their eyes looking into each other for a minute.*]

Gustav. Do you think it is possible to forget a thing which has made so deep an impression on one's life?

Thekla. No; the power of impressions is great, particularly when they are the impressions of one's youth. [*She turns toward the fireplace on her right.*]

Gustav. Do you remember how we met for the first time? You were such an ethereal little thing, a little slate on which your parents and governess had scratched some wretched scrawl, which I had to rub out afterward, and then I wrote a new text on it, according to what I thought right, till it seemed to you that the slate was filled with writing. [*He follows her to the circular table on the right.*] That's why, do you see, I shouldn't like to be in your husband's place—no, that's his business. [*Sits down in front of the circular table.*] But that's why meeting you has an especial fascination for me. We hit it off together so perfectly, and when I sit

down here and chat with you it's just as though I were uncorking bottles of old wine which I myself have bottled. The wine which is served to me is my own, but it has mellowed. And now that I intend to marry again, I have made a very careful choice of a young girl whom I can train according to my own ideas. [*Getting up.*] For woman is man's child, don't you know; if she isn't his child, then he becomes hers, and that means that the world is turned upside down.

Thekla. You're going to marry again?

Gustav. Yes. I'm going to try my luck once more, but this time I'll jolly well see that the double harness is more reliable and shall know how to guard against any bolting.

Thekla. [*Turns and goes over toward him to the left.*] Is she pretty?

Gustav. Yes, according to my taste, but perhaps I'm too old, and, strangely enough—now that chance brings me near to you again—I'm now beginning to have grave doubts of the feasibility of playing a game like that twice over.

Thekla. What do you mean?

Gustav. I feel that my roots are too firmly embedded in your soil, and the old wounds break open. You're a dangerous woman, Thekla.

Thekla. Re-a-lly? My young husband is emphatic that is just what I'm not—that I can't make any more conquests.

Gustav. That means he's left off loving you.

Thekla. What he means by love lies outside my line of country. [*She goes behind the sofa on the left,* GUSTAV *goes after her as far as the table on the left.*]

Gustav. You've played hide and seek so long with each other that the "he" can't catch the she, nor the she the "he," don't you know. Of course, it's just the kind of thing one would expect. You had to play the little innocent, and that made him quite tame. As a matter

of fact, a change has its disadvantages—yes, it has its disadvantages.

Thekla. You reproach me?

Gustav. Not for a minute. What always happens, happens with a certain inevitability, and if this particular thing hadn't happened something else would, but this did happen, and here we are.

Thekla. You're a broad-minded man. I've never yet met anybody with whom I liked so much to have a good straight talk as with you. You have so little patience with all that moralizing and preaching, and you make such small demands on people, that one feels really free in your presence. Do you know, I'm jealous of your future wife? [*She comes forward and passes by him toward the right.*]

Gustav. And you know I'm jealous of your husband.

Thekla. And now we must part! For ever! [*She goes past him till she approaches the center door.*]

Gustav. Quite right, we must part—but before that, we'll say good-bye to each other, won't we?

Thekla. [*Uneasily.*] No.

Gustav. [*Dogging her.*] Yes, we will; yes, we will. We'll say good-bye; we will drown our memories in an ecstasy which will be so violent that when we wake up the past will have vanished from our recollection forever. There are ecstasies like that, you know. [*He puts his arm round her waist.*] You're being dragged down by a sick spirit, who's infecting you with his own consumption. I will breathe new life into you. I will fertilize your genius, so that it will bloom in the autumn like a rose in the spring, I will—— [*Two lady visitors appear on the right behind the central door.*]

SCENE IV

The previous characters; the TWO LADIES.

[*The ladies appear surprised, point, laugh, and exeunt on the left.*]

SCENE V

Thekla. [*Disengaging herself.*] Who was that?

Gustav. [*Casually, while he closes the central door.*] Oh, some visitors who were passing through.

Thekla. Go away! I'm afraid of you. [*She goes behind the sofa on the left.*]

Gustav. Why?

Thekla. You've robbed me of my soul.

Gustav. [*Comes forward.*] And I give you mine in exchange for it. Besides, you haven't got any soul at all. It's only an optical illusion.

Thekla. You've got a knack of being rude in such a way that one can't be angry with you.

Gustav. That's because you know very well that I am designated for the place of honor—tell me now when—and where?

Thekla. [*Coming toward him.*] No. I can't hurt him by doing a thing like that. I'm sure he still loves me, and I don't want to wound him a second time.

Gustav. He doesn't love you. Do you want to have proofs?

Thekla. How can you give me them?

Gustav. [*Takes up from the floor the fragments of photograph behind the circular table on the right.*] Here, look at yourself! [*He gives them to her.*]

Thekla. Oh, that is shameful!

Gustav. There, you can see for yourself—well, when and where?

Thekla. The false brute!

Gustav. When?

Thekla. He goes away to-night by the eight o'clock boat.

Gustav. Then——

Thekla. At nine. [*A noise in the room on the right.*] Who's in there making such a noise?

Gustav. [*Goes to the right to the keyhole.*] Let's

have a look—the fancy table has been upset and there's a broken water-bottle on the floor, that's all. Perhaps someone has shut a dog up there. [*He goes again toward her.*] Nine o'clock, then?

Thekla. Right you are. I should only like him to see the fun—such a piece of deceit, and what's more, from a man that's always preaching truthfulness, who's always drilling into me to speak the truth. But stop—how did it all happen? He received me in almost an unfriendly manner—didn't come to the pier to meet me—then he let fall a remark over the pure boy on the steamboat, which I pretended not to understand. But how could he know anything about it? Wait a moment. Then he began to philosophize about women—then you began to haunt his brain—then he spoke about wanting to be a sculptor, because sculpture was the art of the present day—just like you used to thunder in the old days.

Gustav. No, really? [THEKLA *moves away from* GUSTAV *behind the sofa on the left.*]

Thekla. "No, really." Now I understand. [*To* GUSTAV.] Now at last I see perfectly well what a miserable scoundrel you are. You've been with him and have scratched his heart out of his body. It's you—you who've been sitting here on the sofa. It was you who've been suggesting all these ideas to him: that he was suffering from epilepsy, that he should live a celibate life, that he should pit himself against his wife and try to play her master. How long have you been here?

Gustav. Eight days.

Thekla. You were the man, then, I saw on the steamer?

Gustav. [*Frankly.*] It was I.

Thekla. And did you really think that I'd fall in with your little game?

Gustav. [*Firmly.*] You've already done it.

Thekla. Not yet.

Gustav. [*Firmly.*] Yes, you have.

Thekla. [*Comes forward.*] You've stalked my lamb like a wolf. You came here with a scoundrelly plan of smashing up my happiness and you've been trying to carry it through until I realized what you were up to and put a spoke in your precious wheel.

Gustav. [*Vigorously.*] That's not quite accurate. The thing took quite another course. That I should have wished in my heart of hearts that things should go badly with you is only natural. Yet I was more or less convinced that it would not be necessary for me to cut in actively; besides, I had far too much other business to have time for intrigues. But just now, when I was loafing about a bit, and happened to run across you on the steamer with your circle of young men, I thought that the time had come to get to slightly closer quarters with you two. I came here and that lamb of yours threw himself immediately into the wolf's arms. I aroused his sympathy by methods of reflex suggestion, into details of which, as a matter of good form, I'd rather not go. At first I experienced a certain pity for him, because he was in the very condition in which I had once found myself. Then, as luck would have it, he began unwittingly to probe about in my old wound—you know what I mean—the book—and the ass—then I was overwhelmed by a desire to pluck him to pieces and to mess up the fragments in such a tangle that they could never be put together again. Thanks to the conscientious way in which you had cleared the ground, I succeeded only too easily, and then I had to deal with you. You were the spring in the works that had to be taken to pieces. And, that done, the game was to listen for the smash-up! When I came into this room I had no idea what I was to say. I had a lot of plans in my head, like a chess player, but the character of the opening depended on the moves you made; one move led to another, chance was kind to me. I soon had you on toast—and now you're in a nice mess.

Thekla. Nonsense.

Gustav. Oh yes; what you'd have prayed your stars to avoid has happened: society, in the persons of two lady visitors—I didn't commandeer their appearance because intrigue is not in my line—society, I say, has seen your pathetic reconciliation with your first husband, and the penitent way in which you crawled back into his faithful arms. Isn't that enough?

Thekla. [*She goes over to him toward the right.*] Tell me—you who make such a point of being so logical and so intellectual—how does it come about that you, who make such a point of your maxim that everything which happens happens as a matter of necessity, and that all our actions are determined——

Gustav. [*Corrects her.*] Determined up to a certain extent.

Thekla. It comes to the same thing.

Gustav. No.

Thekla. How does it come about that you, who are bound to regard me as an innocent person, inasmuch as nature and circumstances have driven me to act as I did, could regard yourself as justified in revenging yourself on me?

Gustav. Well, the same principle applies, you see—that is to say, the principle that my temperament and circumstances drove me to revenge myself. Isn't it a case of six of one and half-a-dozen of the other? But do you know why you've got the worst of it in this struggle? [*Thekla looks contemptuous.*] Why you and that husband of yours managed to get downed? I'll tell you. Because I was stronger than you, and smarter. It was you, my dear, who was a donkey—and he as well! So you see, that one isn't necessarily bound to be quite an ass even though one doesn't write any novels or paint any pictures. Just remember that! [*He turns away from her to the left.*]

Thekla. Haven't you got a grain of feeling left?

Gustav. Not a grain—that's why, don't you know, I'm

so good at thinking, as you are perhaps able to see by the slight proofs which I've given you, and can play the practical man equally well, and I've just given you something of a sample of what I can do in that line. [*He strides round the table and sofa on the left and turns again to her.*]

Thekla. And all this simply because I wounded your vanity?

Gustav. [*On her left.*] Not that only, but you'll be jolly careful in the future of wounding other people's vanity—it's the most sensitive part of a man.

Thekla. What a vindictive wretch! Ugh!

Gustav. What a promiscuous wretch. Ugh!

Thekla. Do you mean that's my temperament?

Gustav. Do you mean that's my temperament?

Thekla. [*Goes over toward him to the left.*] You wouldn't like to forgive me?

Gustav. Certainly, I have forgiven you.

Thekla. You?

Gustav. Quite. Have I ever raised my hand against you two in all these years? No. But when I happened to be here I favored you two with scarce a look and the cleavage between you is already there. Did I ever reproach you, moralize, lecture? No. I joked a little with your husband and the accumulated dynamite in him just happened to go off, but I, who am defending myself like this, am the one who's really entitled to stand here and complain. Thekla, have you nothing to reproach yourself with?

Thekla. Not the least bit—the Christians say it's Providence that guides our actions, others call it Fate. Aren't we quite guiltless?

Gustav. No doubt we are to a certain extent. But an infinitesimal something remains, and that contains the guilt, all the same, and the creditors turn up sooner or later! Men and women may be guiltless, but they have to render an account. Guiltless before Him in whom

neither of us believes any more, responsible to themselves and to their fellow-men.

Thekla. You've come, then, to warn me?

Gustav. I've come to demand back what you stole from me, not what you had as a present. You stole my honor, and I could only win back mine by taking yours—wasn't I right?

Thekla. [*After a pause, going over to him on the right*] Honor! Hm! And are you satisfied now?

Gustav. [After a pause.] I am satisfied now. [*He presses the bell by the door L. for the* WAITER.]

Thekla. [*After another pause.*] And now you're going to your bride, Gustav?

Gustav. I have none—and shall never have one. I am not going home because I have no home, and shall never have one. [WAITER *comes in on the left.*]

SCENE VI

[*Previous characters*—WAITER *standing back.*]

Gustav. Bring me the bill—I'm leaving by the twelve o'clock boat. [WAITER *bows and exits left.*]

SCENE VII

Thekla. Without a reconciliation?

Gustav. [*On her left.*] Reconciliation? You play about with so many words that they've quite lost their meaning. We reconcile ourselves? Perhaps we are to live in a trinity, are we? The way for you to effect a reconciliation is to put matters straight. You can't do that alone. You have not only taken something, but you have destroyed what you took, and you can never put it back. Would you be satisfied if I were to say to you: "Forgive me because you mangled my heart with your

claws; forgive me for the dishonor you brought upon me; forgive me for being seven years on end the laughing-stock of my pupils; forgive me for freeing you from the control of your parents; for releasing you from the tyranny of ignorance and superstition; for making you mistress over my house; for giving you a position and friends, I, the man who made you into a woman out of the child you were? Forgive me like I forgive you? Anyway, I now regard my account with you as squared. You go and settle up your accounts with the other man.

Thekla. Where is he? What have you done with him? I've just got a suspicion—a—something dreadful!

Gustav. Done with him? Do you still love him?

Thekla. [*Goes over to him toward the left.*] Yes.

Gustav. And a minute ago you loved me? Is that really so?

Thekla. It is.

Gustav. Do you know what you are, then?

Thekla. You despise me?

Gustav. No, I pity you. It's a characteristic—I don't say a defect, but certainly a characteristic—that is very fatal, by reason of its results. Poor Thekla! I don't know—but I almost think that I'm sorry for it, although I'm quite innocent—like you. But anyway, it's perhaps all for the best that you've now got to feel what I felt then. Do you know where your husband is?

Thekla. I think I know now. [*She points to the right.*] He's in your room just here. He has heard everything, seen everything, and you know they say that he who looks upon his vampire dies.

SCENE VIII

[ADOLF *appears on the right, deadly pale, a streak of blood on his left cheek, a fixed expression in his eyes, white foam on his mouth.*]

Gustav. [*Moves back.*] No, here he is—settle with him now! See if he'll be as generous to you as I was. Good-bye. [*He turns to the left, stops after a few steps, and remains standing.*]

Thekla. [*Goes toward* ADOLF *with outstretched arms.*] Adolf! [ADOLF *sinks down in his chair by the table on the left.* THEKLA *throws herself over him and caresses him.*] Adolf! My darling child, are you alive? Speak! Speak! Forgive your wicked Thekla! Forgive me! Forgive me! Forgive me! Little brother must answer. Does he hear? My God, he doesn't hear me! He's dead! Good God! O my God! Help! Help us!

Gustav. Quite true, she loves him as well—poor creature! [*Curtain*

THE STRONGER WOMAN

CHARACTERS

Mrs. X., actress, married.
Miss Y., actress, unmarried.

THE STRONGER WOMAN

SCENE

A nook in a ladies' café; two small tables, a red plush sofa and some chairs.

MRS. X. *enters in winter dress, in a hat and cloak, with a light Japanese basket over her arm.*

MISS Y. *sits in front of an unfinished bottle of beer and reads an illustrated paper, which she subsequently exchanges for another.*

Mrs. X. How are you, my dear Millie? You look awfully lonely, at this gay time of year, sitting here all by yourself, like a poor bachelor girl.

Miss Y. [*Looks up from her paper, nods and continues her reading.*]

Mrs. X. It makes me really quite sorry to look at you. All alone at a café when all the rest of us are having such a good time of it! It reminds me of how I felt when I saw a wedding party once, in a Paris restaurant, and the bride sat and read a comic paper while the bridegroom played billiards with the witnesses. If they begin like this, I said to myself, how will they go on, and how will they end? Fancy! He was playing billiards on the night of his wedding—and she was reading an illustrated paper! Oh, well, but you are not quite in the same box! [*Waitress enters, puts a cup of chocolate in front of* MRS. *X., and exit.*] I say, Millie, I'm not at all sure that you wouldn't have done better to have kept him. If you come to think of it, I was the first to ask you to forgive him at the time. Don't you remember? Why, you could have been married now, and have had a home! Do you remember how delighted you were at

Christmas when you stayed with your *fiancé's* people in the country? You were quite enthusiastic over domestic happiness and quite keen on getting away from the theater. After all, my dear Amelia, there's nothing like home, sweet home—after the profession, of course!—and the kids. Isn't it so? But you couldn't understand that!

Miss Y. [*Looks contemptuous.*]

Mrs. X. [*Drinks some spoonfuls of chocolate out of her cup, then opens the basket and looks at the Xmas presents.*] There, let me show you what I've bought for my little chicks. [*Takes up a doll.*] Just look at this! That's for Lisa. Just look, it can roll its eyes and waggle its neck. What? And here's Maja's cork pistol. [*Loads and shoots at* Miss Y.]

Miss Y. [*Gives a start.*]

Mrs. X. Are you frightened? Did you think I wanted to shoot you, dear? Upon my word, I'd never have thought you'd have thought that. I'd have been much less surprised if you'd wanted to shoot me, for getting in your way (I know that you can never forget anything), although I was absolutely innocent. You believed of course that I worked it to get you out of the Grand Theater, but I didn't do that. I didn't do it, although you think I did. But it makes no odds my saying all this, for you always think it was me. . . . [*Takes out a pair of embroidered slippers.*] These are for my hubby, with tulips on them which I embroidered myself. I can't stand tulips, you know, but he's awfully keen on them.

Miss Y. [*Looks up ironically and curiously from her paper.*]

Mrs. X. [*Holds a slipper up in each hand.*] Just look what small feet Bob has. Eh! You should just see, dear, how well he carries himself. But of course, you've never seen him in slippers, have you, dear?

Miss Y. [*Laughs loudly.*]

Mrs. X. Look, you must see. [*She walks the slippers upon the table.*]

Miss Y. [*Laughs loudly.*]

Mrs. X. Just see here. This is the way he always stamps about whenever he's out of sorts, like this. "Eh, that damned girl will never learn how to make coffee! Ugh! And now the confounded idiot has trimmed the lamp wrong!" The next minute there's a draught and his feet get cold. "Oof, how cold it is, and that blighted fool can never manage to keep the fire going." [*She rubs the soles of the slippers one against the other.*]

Miss Y. [*Laughs out loud.*]

Mrs. X. And this is how he goes on when he comes home and looks for his slippers, which Mary puts under the chest of drawers. Oh, but it's a shame for me to sit here and give my husband away. He's a good sort, at any rate, and that's something, I can tell you. Yes, you should have a husband like that, Amelia; yes, you, my dear. What are you laughing at? Eh? Eh? And I'll tell you how I know that he's faithful! I am sure of it, for he told me so of his own accord . . . what are you giggling at? Why, when I went for a trip in Norway that ungrateful Frederique ran after him and tried to seduce him—can you think of anything so disgraceful! [*Pause.*] I'd have scratched the eyes out of the creature's head, that I would, if she'd come playing around when I was on the scene! [*Pause.*] It was lucky that Bob told me of his own accord so that I didn't get to hear of it first from a lot of sneaking scandalmongers. [*Pause.*] But Frederique was not the only one, you may say. I didn't know it, but the women are absolutely crazy over my husband. They think he is awfully influential in getting engagements just because he holds an official position! It may be that you, too, have tried to run after him—I don't trust you more than need be—any-

way, I *know* that he doesn't bother about you, and that you seem to have a grudge against him, and consequently against me, the whole time! [*Pause; they look at each other with embarrassment.*] Come round and see us to-night, dear, just to show that you don't feel badly about us, or at any rate, about me! I don't know why, but somehow I feel that it would be particularly ungracious of me to be unfriendly toward you of all people. It may be because I cut you out. [*Speaking more slowly.*] Or —or—I can't tell the reason.

Miss Y. [*Stares at* MRS. X. *curiously.*]

Mrs. X. [*Reflectively.*] But everything went wrong, when you came to our house, because I saw that my husband couldn't stand you—and I felt quite uncomfortable as though there was a hitch somewhere, and I did all I could to make him show himself friendly toward you, but without success—until you went and got engaged and then a keen friendship sprang up, so that it seemed for a moment as though you had only first dared to show your true feelings when you were in safety—and then it went on! . . . I didn't get jealous—strangely enough—and I remember the christening when you stood godmother and I made him kiss you. Yes, I did that, and you got so embarrassed—I mean I didn't notice it at the time—I haven't thought of it since then either, I haven't thought of it from then till now. [*Gets up sharply.*] Why don't you say something? You haven't said a word the whole time, but have just let me sit and talk; you have sat there with those eyes of yours and picked up all my thoughts—thoughts!—hallucinations perhaps—and worked them into your chain link by link. Ah, let me see. Why did you break off your engagement, and why, from that day to this, have you never come any more to our house? Why won't you come in in the evening?

Miss Y. [*Seems as though she were about to speak.*]

Mrs. X. Stop! You needn't say it! I quite understand now. It was because and because and because. Yes, it all fits in! That's what it is. Ugh, I won't sit at the same table with you. [*Moves her things to another table.*] That was why I had to embroider tulips on his slippers though I couldn't stand them; that was why. [*Throws the slippers on the floor.*] That was why I had to spend the summer at Lake Mälarn, because *you* couldn't stand sea air; that was why my boy had to be called Eskil, because that was your father's name; that was why I had to wear your colors, read your authors, eat your favorite dishes, drink your drinks—chocolate, for instance; that was why. O my God! it is ghastly to think of, ghastly; everything I got came from you to me, even your passions! Your soul crept into mine like a worm into an apple, ate and ate—burrowed and burrowed, till there was nothing left but the rotten core. I wanted to avoid you, but I could not; you lay there like a serpent with your black eyes of fascination—I knew that you would succeed at last in dragging me down; I was lying in a swamp with my feet tied, and the more violently I struggled with my hands the deeper did I work down, down to the bottom, while you lay there like a giant crab, and gripped me in your claws; and now here I am at the bottom! Oh, how I hate you, hate you, hate you! But you, you just sit there and say nothing, quiet, indifferent—indifferent. It is all the same to you if it is the beginning or the end of the month; Christmas or New Year; if the rest of the world is happy or unhappy; you can neither hate nor love; you sit as stolidly as a stork over a rat-trap. But you couldn't capture your prey, mind you; you couldn't pursue it; you could only wait for it. Here you sit in your lair —this nook, you know, has been called the Rat Trap— and you read your papers to see if somebody's having a bad time of it, if somebody's had a misfortune, if some-

body's been sacked from the theater; here you sit and survey your victims, reckon out your chances like a pilot his shipwrecks; take your toll.

My poor Amelia, do you know, I feel quite sorry for you, because I know that you are wretched, wretched, like a wounded creature, and malicious because you are wounded. I cannot be angry with you, although I should like to be, because you are the weaker—why, as to that little affair with Bob, I am not bothering about that—what did it really matter to me? Supposing it was you or somebody else who taught me to eat chocolate, what does it matter? [*Drinks a spoonful out of her cup.*] Besides, chocolate is very wholesome, and if I did learn to dress myself in your model, well *tant mieux*—it only strengthens my hold upon my husband—and you were the loser by it while I was the winner. Why, I had ample grounds for coming to the conclusion that you had already lost him—but it was you still thought that I should go my way! But now you carry on as though you were sitting and repenting; but, you see, I don't do that. One mustn't be petty, you know.

Why should I just take what nobody else will have? Perhaps you—taking it all round—are stronger than I am at this particular moment—you never got anything out of me, but you gave me something of yourself. Oh, it's really a case of thieving, in my case, isn't it?—and when you woke up I had possessed myself of the very thing you missed.

How else does it come about that everything you touched became worthless and sterile? You couldn't keep any man's love, with those tulips and those passions of yours—but I could; you weren't able to learn the art of my life out of your authors, but I learned it; you haven't got any little Eskil, although your papa was called Eskil.

Else why do you sit there without a word, and brood

and brood and brood? I thought it was strength, but perhaps the reason is just that you haven't anything to say, that's because you couldn't think of anything to say. [*Rises and takes up the slippers.*] I'm going home now —and taking these tulip things with me—your tulips, my dear; you couldn't learn anything from others—you couldn't yield, and that's why you crumpled up like a dried-up leaf. I didn't do that. I must really thank you, Amelia, for the excellent training you have given me—thank you for teaching my husband how to love. And now I'm going home to love him. [*Exit.*]

[*Curtain.*

MOTHERLY LOVE

CHARACTERS

THE MOTHER
A DRESSER
THE DAUGHTER
LISE

MOTHERLY LOVE

SCENE I

[*The* MOTHER *and the* DRESSER *are smoking cigars, drinking stout, and playing cards. The* DAUGHTER *sits by the window and looks out with intentness.*]

Mother. Come along, Helen—it's your deal.

Daughter. Oh, please let me off playing cards on a fine summer day like this.

Dresser. That's right. Nice and affectionate to her mother, as usual.

Mother. Don't sit like that on the veranda and get scorched.

Daughter. The sun isn't a bit hot here.

Mother. Well, there's a draught, anyway. [*To the* DRESSER.] Your deal, dear. Righto!

Daughter. Mayn't I go and bathe this morning with the other girls?

Mother. Not without your mamma, you know that once for all.

Daughter. Oh, but the girls can swim, mamma, and you can't swim at all.

Mother. That's not the question, whether a body can swim or can't, but you know, my child, that you mustn't go out without your mamma.

Daughter. Do I know it? Since I've been able to understand the simplest thing, that's been dinned into my ears.

Dresser. That only shows that Helen has had a most affectionate mother, who has always tried her best. Yes—yes; no doubt about it.

Mother. [*Holds out her hand to the* DRESSER.] Thank you for your kindly words, Augusta—whatever else I may have been—that—but I was always a tender-hearted mother. I can say that with a clear conscience.

Daughter. Then I suppose it's no good my asking you if I can go down and have a game of tennis with the others?

Dresser. No, no, young lady. A girl shouldn't sauce her mamma. And when she won't oblige those who are nearest and dearest to her, by taking part in their harmless fun, it's in a manner of speaking adding insult to injury for her to come and ask on top of it, if she can't go and amuse herself with other people.

Daughter. Yes—yes—yes. I know all that already. I know—I know!

Mother. You're making yourself disagreeable again. Get something proper to do, and don't sit slacking there in that fashion. A grown-up girl like you!

Daughter. Then why do you always treat me like a child if I'm grown up?

Mother. Because you behave like one.

Daughter. You have no right to rag me—you yourself wanted me to remain like this.

Mother. Look here, Helen; for some time past I think you've been a bit too bloomin' smart. Come, whom have you been talking to down here?

Daughter. With you two, among others.

Mother. You don't mean to say you're going to start having secrets from your own mother?

Daughter. It's about time.

Dresser. Shame on you, you young thing, being so cheeky to your own mother!

Mother. Come, let's do something sensible instead of jangling like this. Why not come here, and read over your part with me?

Daughter. The manager said I wasn't to go through

it with anyone, because if I did, I should only learn something wrong.

Mother. I see; so that's the thanks one gets for trying to help you. Of course, of course! Everything that I do is always silly, I suppose.

Daughter. Why do you do it then? And why do you put the blame on to me, whenever you do anything wrong?

Dresser. Of course you want to remind your mother that she ain't educated? Ugh, 'ow common!

Daughter. You say I want to, aunt, but it's not the case. If mother goes and teaches me anything wrong, I've got to learn the whole thing over again, if I don't want to lose my engagement. We don't want to find ourselves stranded.

Mother. I see. You're now letting us know that we're living on what you earn. But do you really know what you owe Aunt Augusta here? Do you know that she looked after us when your blackguard of a father left us in the lurch?—that she took care of us and that you therefore owe her a debt which you can never pay off—in all your born days? Do you know that? [DAUGHTER *is silent.*] Do you know that? Answer.

Daughter. I refuse to answer.

Mother. You do—do you? You won't answer?

Dresser. Steady on, Amelia. The people next door might hear us, and then they'd start gossiping again. So you go steady.

Mother. [*To* DAUGHTER.] Put on your things and come out for a walk.

Daughter. I'm not going out for a walk to-day.

Mother. This is now the third day that you've refused to go out for a walk with your mother. [*Reflecting.*] Would it be possible—— Go out on to the veranda, Helen. I want to say something to Aunt Augusta. [DAUGHTER *exit on to the veranda.*]

SCENE II

Mother. Do you think it's possible?

Dresser. What?

Mother. That she's found out something?

Dresser. It ain't possible.

Mother. It might 'appen, of course. Not that I think anybody could be so heartless as to tell it to her to her face. I had a nephew who was thirty-six years old before he found out that his father was a suicide, but Helen's manner's changed, and there's something at the bottom of it. For the last eight days I've noticed that she couldn't bear my being with her on the promenade. She would only go along lonely paths; when anyone met us she looked the other way; she was nervous, couldn't manage to get a single word out. There's something behind all this.

Dresser. Do you mean, if I follow you aright, that the society of her mother is painful to her?—the society of her own mother?

Mother. Yes.

Dresser. No; that's really a bit too bad.

Mother. Well, I'll tell you something which is even worse. Would you believe it, that when we came here, she didn't introduce me to some of her friends on the steamer?

Dresser. Do you know what I think? She's met someone or other who's come here during the last week. Come, we'll just toddle down to the post office and find out about the latest arrivals.

Mother. Yes, let's do that. I say, Helen, just mind the house a minute. We're only going down to the post for a moment.

Daughter. Yes, mamma.

Mother. [*To* DRESSER.] It's just as though I'd dreamed all this before.

Dresser. Yes; dreams come true sometimes—I know that all right—but not the nice ones.

[*Exeunt* R.

SCENE III

[DAUGHTER *gives a nod out of the window;* LISE *enters. She wears a tennis costume quite white, and a white hat.*]

Lise. Have they gone?

Daughter. Yes; but they're soon coming back.

Lise. Well, what did your mother say?

Daughter. I haven't even had the pluck to ask her. She was in such a temper.

Lise. Poor Helen! So you can't come with us on the excursion? And I was looking forward to it so much. If you only knew how fond I am of you. [*Kisses her.*]

Daughter. I you only knew, dear, what these days have meant to me since I've made your acquaintance and visited your house—have meant to a girl like me, who's never mixed with decent people in her whole life. Just think what it must have been for me. Up to the present I've been living in a den where the air was foul, where shady, mysterious people came in and out, who spied and brawled and wrangled; where I have never heard a kind word, much less ever got a caress, and where my soul was watched like a prisoner. Oh, I'm talking like this about my mother, and it hurts me! And you will only despise me for it.

Lise. One can't be made responsible for one's parents.

Daughter. No; but you've got to pay the penalty for them. At any rate they say that very often one doesn't find out before the end of one's life the kind of people one's own parents, with whom one's lived all one's life, have really been. And I've picked up this as well, that even if one does get to hear about it one doesn't believe a word.

Lise. [*Uneasily.*] Have you heard anything?

Daughter. Yes. When I was in the Bath-house three days ago I heard through the wall what people were saying about my mother. Do you know what it was?

Lise. Don't bother about it.

Daughter. They said my mother had been just a common creature! I wouldn't believe it; I won't yet believe it. But I feel that it is true; it all fits in—to make it probable—and I am ashamed—ashamed of going near her, because I think that people stare at us—that the men throw us looks. It's too awful. But is it true? Tell me if you think that it's true?

Lise. People tell so many lies—and I don't know anything.

Daughter. Yes, you do know—you do know something. You won't tell me, and I thank you for it; but I am equally miserable whether you tell me or whether you don't——

Lise. My darling friend, knock that thought out of your head and come home to us—you'll find you'll get on splendidly with everyone. My father arrived early this morning. He asked after you, and wanted to see you—I ought, of course, to tell you they have written to him about you—and Cousin Gerhard as well, because I think——

Daughter. Yes, you—you have a father and I had one too, when I was still quite, quite tiny.

Lise. What became of him, then?

Daughter. Mother always says he left us because he was a bad lot.

Lise. It's hard to find where the truth lies. But—I tell you what; if you come home to us now you'll meet the director of the Imperial Theater, and it's possible it might be a question of an engagement.

Daughter. What do you say?

Lise. Yes, yes—that's it. And he takes an interest

in you—I mean Gerhard—and I have made him take an interest in you, and you know quite well what trifles often decide one's whole life; a personal interview, a good recommendation at the right moment—well, now, you can't refuse any longer, without standing in the way of your own career.

Daughter. Oh, darling, I should think I did want to come. You know that quite well; but I don't go out without mamma.

Lise. Why not? Can you give me any reason?

Daughter. I don't know. She taught me to say that when I was a child. And now it's got deeply rooted.

Lise. Has she extracted some promise from you?

Daughter. No, she didn't have any need to do that. She just said "Say that!" and I said it.

Lise. Do you think then that you're doing her a wrong if you leave her for an hour or two?

Daughter. I don't think that she would miss me, because when I am at home she's always got some fault to find with me. But I should find it painful if I went to a house when she wasn't allowed to come too.

Lise. Do you mean to say you've thought of the possibility of her visiting us?

Daughter. No—God forgive me, I never thought of it for a moment.

Lise. But supposing you were to get married?

Daughter. I shall never get married.

Lise. Has your mother taught you to say that as well?

Daughter. Yes, probably. She has always warned me of men.

Lise. Of married men as well?

Daughter. Presumably.

Lise. Look here, Helen; you should really emancipate yourself.

Daughter. Ugh! I haven't the faintest desire to be a new woman.

Lise. No, I don't mean that. But you must free yourself from a position of dependence which you have grown out of, and which may make you unhappy for life.

Daughter. I scarcely think I shall ever be able to. Just consider how I've been tied down to my mother since I was a child; that I've never dared to think a thought that wasn't hers; have never wished anything but her wishes. I know that it's a handicap; that it stands in my way, but I can't do anything against it.

Lise. And if your mother goes to rest, one fine day, you'll be all alone in the world.

Daughter. That's how I shall find myself.

Lise. But you've got no set, no friend; and no one can live as lonely as all that. You must find some firm support. Have you never been in love?

Daughter. I don't know. I've never dared to think of anything like that, and mother has never allowed young men even to look at me. Do you yourself think of such things?

Lise. Yes. If anyone's fond of me I should like to have him.

Daughter. You'll probably marry your cousin Gerhard.

Lise. I shall never do that—because he does not love me.

Daughter. Not love you?

Lise. No; because he's fond of you.

Daughter. Me?

Lise. Yes—and he has commissioned me to inquire if he can call on you.

Daughter. Here? No, that's impossible. And besides, do you think I would stand in your way? Do you think I could supplant you in his regard, you who are so pretty, so delicate. [*Takes* LISE'S *hand in hers.*] What a hand! And the wrists! I saw your foot when we were in the Bath-house together. [*Falls on her knees before* LISE,

who has sat down.] A foot on which there isn't even a crooked nail, on which the toes are as round and as rosy as a baby's hand. [*Kisses* LISE'S *foot.*] You belong to the nobility—you're made of different stuff from what I am.

Lise. Leave off, please, and don't talk so sillily. [*Gets up.*] If you only knew—but——

Daughter. And I'm sure you're as good as you're beautiful; we always think that down below here when we look up at you above there, with your delicate chiseled features, where trouble hasn't made any wrinkles, where envy and jealousy have not drawn their hateful lines——

Lise. Look here, Helen; I really think you're quite mad on me.

Daughter. Yes, I am that, too. I wish I were like you a bit, just as a miserable whitlow-grass is like an anemone, and that's why I see in you my better self, something that I should like to be and never can be. You have tripped into my life during the last summer days as lightly and as delicately as an angel; now the autumn's come: the day after to-morrow we go back to town—then we shan't know each other any more—and we mustn't know each other any more. You can never draw me up, dear, but I can draw you down—and I don't want to do that! I want to have you so high, so high and so far away, that I can't see your blemishes. And so good-bye, Lise, my first and only friend.

Lise. No, that's enough. Helen, do you know—who I am? Well—I—am your sister.

Daughter. You—— What can you mean?

Lise. We have—the same father.

Daughter. And you are my sister, my little sister? But what is my father then? But of course he must be captain of a yacht, because your father is one. How silly

I am! But then he married, after. Is he kind to you? He wasn't to my mother.

Lise. You don't know. But aren't you awfully glad to have found a little sister—one too who isn't so very loud?

Daughter. Oh, rather; I'm so glad that I really don't know what to say. [*Embrace.*] But I really daren't be properly glad because I don't know what's going to happen after all this. What will mother say, and what will it be like if we meet papa?

Lise. Just leave your mother to me. She can't be far away now. And you keep in the background till you are wanted. And now come and give me a kiss, little 'un. [*They kiss.*]

Daughter. My sister. How strange the word sounds, just like the word father when one has never uttered it.

Lise. Don't let's go on chattering now, but let's stick to the point. Do you think that your mother would still refuse her permission if we were to invite you—to come and see your sister and your father?

Daughter. Without my mother? Oh, she hates your—my father so dreadfully.

Lise. But suppose she has no reason to do so? If you only knew how full the world is of concoctions and lies and mistakes and misunderstandings. My father used to tell the story of a chum he used to have when he first went to sea as a cadet. A gold watch was stolen from one of the officers' cabins and—God knows why!—suspicion fell on the cadet. His mates avoided him, practically sent him to Coventry, and that embittered him to such an extent that he became impossible to associate with, got mixed up in a row and had to leave. Two years afterward the thief was discovered, in the person of a boatswain; but no satisfaction could be given to the innocent boy, because people had only been suspicious of him. And the suspicion will stick to him for the rest of his

life, although it was refuted, and the wretch still keeps a nickname which was given to him at the time. His life grew up like a house that's built and based on its own bad fame, and when the false foundation is cut away the building remains standing all the same; it floated in the air like the castle in "The Arabian Nights." You see —that's what happens in the world. But even worse things can happen, as in the case of that instrument maker in Arboga, who got the name of being an incendiary because his house had been set fire to; or as happened to a certain Anderson, whom people called Thief Anders because he had been the victim of a celebrated burglary.

Daughter. Do you mean to say that my father hasn't been what I always thought he was?

Lise. Yes, that's just it.

Daughter. This is how I see him sometimes in dreams, since I lost all recollection of him—isn't he fairly tall, with a dark beard and big blue sailor eyes?

Lise. Yes—more or less!

Daughter. And then—wait, now I remember. Do you see this watch? There's a little compass fastened on to the chain, and on the compass at the north there's an eye. Who gave me that?

Lise. Your father. I was there when he bought it.

Daughter. Then it's he whom I've seen so often in the theater when I was playing. He always sat in the left stage box, and held his opera glasses trained on me. I never dared to tell mother because she was always so very nervous about me. And once he threw me flowers—but mother burned them. Do you think it was he?

Lise. It was he; you can count on it that during all these years his eye has followed you like the eye of the needle on the compass.

Daughter. And you tell me that I shall see him—that he wants to meet me? It's like a fairy tal

Lise. The fairy tale's over now. I hear your mother. You get back—I'm going first, to face the fire.

Daughter. Something dreadful's going to happen now, I feel it. Why can't people agree with each other and be at peace? Oh, if only it were all over! If mamma would only be nice. I will pray to God outside there to make her soft-hearted—but I'm certain He can't do it—I don't know why.

Lise. He can do it, and He will, if you can only have faith, have a little faith in happiness and your own strength.

Daughter. Strength? What for? To be selfish? I can't do it. And the enjoyment of a happiness that is bought at the cost of someone else's unhappiness cannot be lasting.

Lise. Indeed? Now go out.

Daughter. How can you possibly believe that this will turn out all right?

Lise. Hush!

SCENE IV

Previous characters. The MOTHER

Lise. Madam.

Mother. Miss—if you don't mind.

Lise. Your daughter——

Mother. Yes, I have a daughter, even though I'm only a "Miss," and indeed that happens to many of us, and I'm not a bit ashamed of it. But what's it all about?

Lise. The fact is, I'm commissioned to ask you if Miss Helen can join in an excursion which some visitors have got up.

Mother. Hasn't Helen herself answered you?

Lise. Yes; she has very properly answered that I should address myself to you.

Mother. That wasn't a straightforward answer. Helen, my child, do you want to join a party to which your mother isn't invited?

Daughter. Yes, if you allow it.

Mother. If I allow it! How can I decide what a big girl like you is to do? You yourself must tell the young lady what you want; if you want to leave your mother alone in disgrace, while you gad about and have a good time; if you want people to ask after mamma, and for you to have to try and wriggle out of the answer: "She has been left out of the invitation, because and because and because." Now say what you really want to do.

Lise. My dear lady, don't let's beat about the bush. I know perfectly well the view Helen takes of this business, and I also know your method of getting her to make that particular answer which happens to suit you. If you are as fond of your daughter as you say you are, you ought to wish what is best for her, even though it might be humiliating for you.

Mother. Look here, my girl; I know what your name is, and who you are, even though I haven't had the privilege of being introduced to you; but I should really like to know what a girl of your years has got to teach a woman of mine.

Lise. Who knows? For the last six years, since my mother died, I have spent all my time in bringing up my young sisters and brothers, and I've found out that there are people who never learn anything from life, however old they get.

Mother. What do you mean?

Lise. I mean this. Your daughter has now got an opportunity of taking her place in the world; of either getting recognition for her talent or of contracting an alliance with a young man in good position.

Mother. That sounds all very fine, but what do you propose to do about me?

Lise. You're not the point, your daughter is! Can't you think about her for a single minute without immediately thinking of yourself?

Mother. Ah, but, mind you, when I think of myself I think of my daughter at the same time, because she has learned to love her mother.

Lise. I don't think so. She depends on you because you've shut her off from all the rest of the world, and she must have someone to depend on, since you've stolen her away from her father.

Mother. What's that you say?

Lise. That you took the child away from her father when he refused to marry you, because you hadn't been faithful to him. You then prevented him from seeing his child, and avenged your own misconduct on him and upon your child.

Mother. Helen, don't you believe a single word of anything that she says—that I should live to see such a day! For a stranger to intrude into my house and insult me in the presence of my own child!

Daughter. [*Comes forward.*] You have no business to say anything bad about my mother.

Lise. It's impossible to do otherwise, if I'm to say anything good about my father. Anyway I observe that the conversation is nearly over, so allow me to give you one or two pieces of advice. Get rid of the procuress who finds herself so at home here under the name of Aunt Augusta if you don't want your daughter's reputation to be absolutely ruined. That's tip number one. Further, put in order all your receipts for the money which you had from my father for Helen's education, because settlement day's precious near. That's tip number two. And now for an extra tip. Leave off persecuting your daughter with your company in the street and, above all, at the theater, because if you don't she's barred from any engagement; and then you'll go about

trying to sell her favors, just as, up to the present, you've been trying to buy back your lost respectability at the expense of her father.

Mother. [*Sits, crushed.*]

Daughter. [*To* LISE.] Leave this house. You find nothing sacred, not even motherhood.

Lise. A sacred motherhood, I must say!

Daughter. It seems now as though you've only come into this house to destroy us, and not for a single minute to put matters right.

Lise. Yes, I did! I came here to—to put right the good name of my father, who was perfectly guiltless—as guiltless as that incendiary whose house had been set on fire. I came also to put you right, you who've been the victim of a woman whose one and only chance of rehabilitation is by retiring to a place where she won't be disturbed by anybody, and where she on her side won't disturb anybody's peace. That's why I came. I have done my duty. Good-bye.

Mother. Miss Lise—don't go before I've said one thing—you came here, apart from all the other tomfoolery, to invite Helen out to your place.

Lise. Yes. She was to meet the director of the Imperial Theater, who takes quite an interest in her.

Mother. What's that? The director? And you've never mentioned a word about it. Yes—Helen may go—alone. Yes, without me!

Daughter. [*Makes a gesture.*]

Lise. Well, after all, it was only human nature that you should have carried on like that. Helen, you must come, do you see?

Daughter. Yes, but now I don't want to any more.

Mother. What are you talking about?

Daughter. No, I'm not fitted for society. I shall never feel comfortable anywhere where my mother is despised.

Mother. Stuff and nonsense! You surely ain't going

to go and cut your own throat? Now just you go and dress so as to look all right!

Daughter. No, I can't, mother. I can't leave you now that I know everything. I shall never have another happy hour. I can never believe in anything again.

Lise. [*To* MOTHER.] Now you shall reap what you have sown—if one day a man comes and makes your daughter his bride, then you'll be alone in your old age, and then you'll have time to be sorry for your foolishness. Good-bye. [*Goes and kisses* HELEN'S *forehead.*] Good-bye, sister.

Daughter. Good-bye.

Lise. Look me in the face and try and seem as though you had some hope in life.

Daughter. I can't. I can't thank you either for your good-will, for you have given me more pain than you know—you woke me with a shake when I lay in the sunshine by a woodland precipice and slept.

Lise. Give me another chance, and I'll wake you with songs and flowers. Good night. Sleep well. [*Exit.*

SCENE V

Previous characters. Later the DRESSER

Mother. An angel of light in white garments, I suppose! No! She's a devil, a regular devil! And you! How silly you've been behaving! What madness next, I wonder! Playing the sensitive when other people's hides are so thick.

Daughter. To think of your being able to tell me all those untruths. Deceiving me so that I talked thus about my father during so many years.

Mother. Oh, come on! It's no good crying over spilt milk.

Daughter. And then again, Aunt Augusta!

Mother. Stop it. Aunt Augusta is a most excellent woman, to whom you are under a great obligation.

Daughter. That's not true either—it was my father, I'm sure, who had me educated.

Mother. Well, yes, it was, but I too have to live. You're so petty! And you're vindictive as well. Can't you forget a little taradiddle like that? Hello! Augusta's turned up already. Come along, now let us humble folks amuse ourselves as best as we can.

SCENE VI

Previous Characters. DRESSER.

Dresser. Yes, it was he right enough. You see, I'd guessed quite right.

Mother. Oh, well, don't let's bother about the blackguard.

Daughter. Don't speak like that, mother; it's not a bit true!

Dresser. What's not true?

Daughter. Come along. We'll play cards. I can't pull down the wall which you've taken so many years to build up. Come along then. [*She sits down at the card table and begins to shuffle the cards.*]

Mother. Well, you've come to your senses at last, my gal. [*Curtain.*

PARIA

CHARACTERS

Mr. X., an archæologist
Mr. Y., a traveler from America } Middle-aged men.

PARIA

SCENERY

Simple room in the country; door and windows at the back looking out on a landscape. In the middle of the floor a big dining table with books, writing materials, archæological implements on one side; microscope, etymological cabinet, flask of spirits on the other. On the left a bookcase; otherwise the furniture of the house of a rich peasant.

Mr. Y. *comes in with a butterfly net and in his shirt-sleeves; goes straight up to the bookcase and takes down a book, which he starts reading. The bells ring after service in the local church; the landscape and the room are flooded with sunlight.*

Now and again the hens are to be heard clucking outside. Enter Mr. X. *in his shirt-sleeves.*

Mr. Y. *gives a violent start, in turn puts the book down and takes it up—pretends to look for another book on the shelf.*

Mr. X. What oppressive weather! I quite think we shall have thunder.

Mr. Y. Re-ally, old man? Why do you think so?

Mr. X. The bells are ringing so dully—the flies are stinging, the hens are clucking, I should be out fishing, but couldn't find a worm. Don't you feel nervous?

Mr. Y. [*Reflectively.*] I? Oh no!

Mr. X. My dear man, you look the whole time as though you were expecting a regular thunderstorm.

Mr. Y. [*Gives a start.*] Do I?

Mr. X. Well, you'll be leaving to-morrow with me. What's the news? Here's the post. [*Takes up a letter from the table.*] Ah! My heart beats like anything each time I open a letter—nothing but debts, debts, debts. Have you ever been in debt?

Mr. Y. [*Shifting about.*] No.

Mr. X. Quite so, then my dear chap, you've no idea what I feel like when unpaid bills come in. [*He reads letter.*] Rent unpaid, landlord on the warpath, wife in despair. And I who sit here up to my ears in gold. [*Opens an iron-bound chest which is on the table on either side of which the two men are sitting.*] Look here; I've got here about six thousand kronors' worth of gold which I dug up in fourteen days! I only want these armlets here for the three hundred and fifty kronors that I actually require. And with all this I ought to do myself thundering well. I ought, of course, at once to get drawings made, and blocks cut for my book, and then get it published, and then travel. Why don't I do it, do you think?

Mr. Y. You are afraid of being discovered.

Mr. X. Perhaps that's it. But don't you think that a man of my intelligence ought to be able to work it so that he's not discovered? I just went alone—without witnesses—rummaged about there beyond the hills. Would there be anything strange in my filling my pockets a bit?

Mr. Y. Quite so, but selling would probably be particularly risky.

Mr. X. Ah! ah! I should of course melt it all down and coin good golden ducats—full weight, of course.

Mr. Y. Of course.

Mr. X. You can quite understand that, if I were running a false mint, well, there'd be no need for me to dig up my gold. [*Pause.*] It's remarkable, at all events; if another person were to do this, which I can't reconcile myself to, why I should absolve him, but I can't absolve myself. I could make a brilliant defence of the

thief, prove that gold was *res nullius,* or nobody's, that it came into the earth at a time when there was no such thing as property, that it shouldn't by right belong to anybody else except the first-comer, since the contents of the earth existed a long time before landowners made their artificial laws of real property.

Mr. Y. And you would make your case all the more plausible if, as you say, the thief did not steal from want, but as a matter of collecting mania, as a matter of pure scholarship, because of his ambition to make a discovery. Isn't that so?

Mr. X. You mean that I shouldn't get him off if he had stolen out of want? No, that's just the one case for which there is no excuse. That's pure theft.

Mr. Y. And wouldn't you excuse that?

Mr. X. How? Excuse? I couldn't, for there are no excuses in law. But I must confess that I should find it hard to prosecute a collector for theft, because he made an archæological discovery in somebody else's ground which he didn't have in his own collection.

Mr. Y. Then vanity and ambition are to serve as an excuse where want is no excuse?

Mr. X. And all the same want should be the valid, the only excuse. But it's like this, I can't alter, any more than I can alter my own will not to steal in any such case.

Mr. Y. You count it then, as a great merit of yours that you can't—h'm—steal.

Mr. X. It's an irresistible something in my character, just as the craving to steal is something irresistible in other people, and therefore it's no virtue. I cannot do it and he cannot refrain from doing it—you quite understand, my dear fellow? I covet this gold and want to possess it. Why don't I take it, then? I can't. It's simply disability, and something lacking is scarcely a merit. That's what it is. [*Beats on the chest.*]

[*It has rained in streams outside in the country, and*

now and then the room becomes dark. The darkness is that of approaching thunder.]

Mr. Y. It's awfully stuffy. I think we shall have thunder. [Mr. Y. *rises and closes the door and windows.*]

Mr. X. Are you frightened of thunder?

Mr. Y. One has to be careful. [*Pause.*]

Mr. X. You are a queer fellow. You spring yourself on me here a fortnight ago, introduce yourself as a Swedish American on an etymological journey for a museum.

Mr. Y. Don't bother yourself about me.

Mr. X. That's how you always go on when I get tired of talking about myself and want to show you some little attention. That's perhaps why you're so sympathetic to me, because you let me speak so much about myself. We became old friends in no time; you had no angles I could knock up against, no bristles to prick me with. It wasn't just so much that your whole person was so full of a deference which only a highly refined man could manifest; you never made any row when you came home late; never made a noise when you got up in the morning; didn't bother about trifles; caved in when there was any chance of a squabble—in a word, you were the ideal companion. But you were much too yielding, much too negative, much too silent, for me not to think about it in the long run—and you're as funky and nervous as they're made. That looks as though you had a shadow knocking about somewhere. I tell you what—when I sit here in front of the mirror, and look at your back, it's as though I saw another man altogether. [Mr. Y. *turns round and looks in the looking glass.*] Yes; you can't see yourself from the back. From the front view you look like a straight man going about to face his life with his head up, but the back view—no, I don't want to be offensive—but you look as though you carried some burden, as

though you were flinching from some blow, and when I see the cross of your red braces on your shirt—then you look like one big brand, an export brand on a package.

Mr. Y. [*Rises.*] I think I shall suffocate, if the thunderstorm doesn't break soon.

Mr. X. That'll come in a minute, you just steady on. And then the nape of your neck. It looks as though there were another face there, but of another type than yours; you are so awfully small between the ears that I sometimes wonder what race you are. [*It lightens.*] That looks as though it had struck the inspector's place.

Mr. Y. [*Anxious.*] The inspector's place?

Mr. X. Yes, that's what it looks like. But all this thunderstorm business doesn't matter to us. Just you sit down and let's have a chat, as you are leaving to-morrow. It's a queer thing that you, with whom I became quite pally in almost no time, are one of those people whose faces I can't call to mind when they aren't there. When you're out of doors, and I remember you, I think all the time of another friend of mine, who isn't really like you, though at the same time there is a certain likeness.

Mr. Y. Who is it?

Mr. X. I won't mention his name. However, I always used to feed at the same place many years ago, and I met then, over the *hors d'œuvres,* a little blond man with pale, agonized eyes. He had an extraordinary power of being in the front of any crush without either pushing or being pushed; he could take a slice of bread from yards away even though he stood by the door; he always seemed happy to be with people, and when he found a friend he would follow him about with hysterical enthusiasm, embrace him and slap him on his back as though he hadn't met a human being for years and years. If anyone trampled on him, it would be as though he begged his pardon for being in the way. During the two years I kept on seeing him I amused myself by guessing his

profession and character, but I never asked him what he was, because I didn't want to know, because my hobby would have gone bust as soon as I did. This man had the same characteristic as you—that of being nondescript. Sometimes I'd put him down as a grammar school usher, a subaltern, a chemist, a clerk of the peace, or one of the secret police, and he seemed, like you, to be made up of two heterogeneous pieces which fitted in front but not at the back.

One day it happened I read in the papers about a big check forgery by a well-known civil servant. I then knew that my nondescript friend had been the partner of the forger's brother, and that his name was Stroman, and in that way I found out that the aforesaid Stroman had previously carried on business as a lending library, but that he was now a police court reporter on a big daily. But how could I establish any connection between the forgery, the police and his nondescript demeanor? I don't know, but when I asked a friend if Stroman was punished he neither answered no nor yes; he simply didn't know. [*Pause.*]

Mr. Y. Well? Was he—punished?

Mr. X. No, he went scot-free. [*Pause.*]

Mr. Y. Don't you think that may have been why the police had such a morbid fascination for him and why he was so frightened of knocking up against his fellow-men?

Mr. X. Yes.

Mr. Y. Do you still keep up with him?

Mr. X. No; and I don't wish to. [*Pause.*] Would you have still kept up with him if he had been—convicted?

Mr. Y. Yes—like a shot. [Mr. Y. *gets up and walks up and down.*]

Mr. X. Sit still—why can't you sit still?

Mr. Y. Where did you get your broad views of human conduct? Are you a Christian?

Mr. X. No—can't you see that? [Mr. Y. *Facial expression.*] The Christian asks for forgiveness as I ask for punishment—to restore the balance, or whatever you call it. And you, my friend, who've done your little stretch, ought to know that quite well.

Mr. Y. [*Is nervous and stunned. Looking at* Mr. X. *first with wild hate and then with wonder and admiration.*] How—can—you—know—that?

Mr. X. I can see it.

Mr. Y. How? How can you see it?

Mr. X. I have taught myself. It's just a science, like so many others. But now we won't talk about it any more. [*Looks at his watch, takes out a paper for signature, dips his pen in the ink and hands it to* Mr. Y.] I must think of my own business troubles. Would you mind witnessing my signature on this bill which I shall present to the Malmo bank to-morrow when I follow you?

Mr. Y. I don't intend to travel by Malmo.

Mr. X. No?

Mr. Y. No.

Mr. X. But at all events you can witness my signature?

Mr. Y. No; I never put my name to a piece of paper.

Mr. X. Again—that's the fifth time you've refused to sign your name. The first time was on a post-receipt—that was when I first began to observe you; now I notice that you are frightened of pen and ink. You haven't sent off one letter since we've been here; only a single letter-card, and that you wrote in pencil. Do you understand now how I worked out your lapse? Again, that's the seventh time you refused to accompany me to Malmo, though you haven't been there at all this time. And all the time you've come here from America simply to see Malmo. And every morning you go half-a-mile southward to the windmills just so as to see the roofs of

Malmo. And you stand there, my friend, by the right window, and look out through the third pane of glass on the left counting from the bottom, so that you get a view of the spires of the castle and the chimney of the prison. So you see now it's not a case of my being so smart, but of your being so dense.

Mr. Y. Now you despise me?

Mr. X. No.

Mr. Y. Yes, you do; you must do so.

Mr. X. No. See, here's my hand on it. [Mr. Y. *kisses the outstretched hand.* Mr. X. *takes back his hand.*] What bestial fawning!

Mr. Y. Forgive me! but you were the first man, sir, who held out his hand to me after he knew——

Mr. X. And now you start calling me "Sir." It appalls me that, after you've served your sentence, you don't feel you can hold your head up, and start with a clean sheet, on the level, just as good as anybody else. Will you tell me all about it? Will you?

Mr. Y. [*Wriggles.*] Yes; but you won't believe what I tell you. I'll tell you about it, and you'll see that I'm not just an ordinary criminal, and you'll be convinced that my fall took place, as one says, against my will. [*Wriggles.*] Just as though it came of itself—spontaneously—without free will and as though one couldn't help it. Let me open the door a little. I think the thunder has passed over.

Mr. X. If you wouldn't mind.

Mr. Y. [*Opens the door, then sits on the table and tells his story with frigid enthusiasm, theatrical gestures and affected intonation.*] Yes, do you see, I was a student at Lind, and once I wanted a loan from the bank. I had no serious debts, and my governor had a little property, but not much, you know. In the meanwhile I had sent the bill to another man to back, and contrary to all my expectations I got it back with a refusal. For a whole

hour I sat stupefied by the blow; you see, it was a most unpleasant surprise, most unpleasant. The document happened to be lying on the table. Close by was the letter. My eyes wandered first over the fatal lines that contained my doom—as a matter of fact it wasn't my death sentence, because I could quite easily have got somebody else to back it, as a matter of fact as many people as I wanted, but, as I said, it was very unpleasant as things stood; and as I was sitting there in my innocence my gaze became gradually riveted on that signature on the letter, which, if only in its right place, would perhaps have saved my future. The signature was just a piece of ordinary handwriting—you know how, when you're thinking about something else, you can sit down and fill a piece of blotting paper with absolute nonsense. I had a pen in my hand. [*Takes up the pen.*] See here, and, just like this, it began to move. I'm not going to contend that there was anything mystical—anything spiritualistic—at the back of it, because I don't believe in all that stuff; it was simply a purely mechanical thoughtless process, as I sat and copied that pretty signature time after time—of course without any intention of making any advantage out of it. When the sheet had been covered I had acquired a complete proficiency in signing the name. [*Throws the pen quickly away.*] And then I forgot all about it. All night I slept deeply and heavily, and when I woke up I felt as though I had dreamed, but could not remember my dream; at times it seemed as though a door were ajar and I saw the writing table with a bill on it just like mine, and when I got up I went straight up to that table just as though I had after mature consideration made the irrevocable resolution to write the name on that blank piece of paper. All thought of consequences—of risks—had vanished; there was no hesitation—it was just as though I was fulfilling a solemn duty—and I wrote. [*Springs up.*] What could it have been?

Is it a case of inspiration or suggestion? But from whom? I had slept alone in the room. Could it have been the primitive part of my ego, the savage part, which was a stranger to all progress, which in the working of my subconsciousness during sleep had come along with its criminal will and its inability to calculate the consequences of an act? Tell me, what do you think of the matter?

Mr. X. [*Torturing him.*] Quite frankly, your story does not satisfy me completely. I find gaps in it, but that may be because you haven't remembered the details, and as to criminal suggestion, which I've read a fair amount about, I'll try and remember—hm! But it all comes to the same thing—you've served your punishment—and you've had the pluck to own up to the error of your ways. Now don't let's talk any more about it.

Mr. Y. No, no, no, we will go on talking about it until I convince myself that I'm not a criminal.

Mr. X. Haven't you done that?

Mr. Y. No, I haven't.

Mr. X. Yes, you see, it's that which bothers me. It's that which bothers me. Don't you think that every man has a skeleton in his cupboard? Haven't we all stolen and lied as children? Yes, of course we have. Well, one finds men who remain children all their lives, so that they're unable to control their criminal desires. If the opportunity but presents itself, one of the type will become a criminal immediately. But I can't understand why you don't feel yourself innocent. If you look upon children as irresponsible, you ought to look upon criminals in the same way. It's strange—yes, it is strange, I shall perhaps be sorry afterwards, that—— [*Pause.*] I once killed a man. I did, and I have never had any qualms.

Mr. Y. [*Keenly interested.*] You—you?

Mr. X. Yes, I myself. Perhaps you'd rather not shake hands with a murderer?

Mr. Y. [*Briskly.*] Oh, what rot!

Mr. X. Yes, but I went scot-free.

Mr. Y. [*With an air of familiarity and superiority.*] All the better for you! How did you dodge the coppers?

Mr. X. There was no one to accuse me—no one to suspect me—there were no witnesses. The thing was like this. A friend of mine had invited me one Christmas to his place outside Upsala for the hunting. He sent to drive me a drunken old blighter who went to sleep upon the box, drove bang into a hole and upset in the ditch. I won't say it was a matter of life and death, but in a fit of temper I let him have it in the neck to wake him up, with the result that he never woke up, but lay there dead.

Mr. Y. [*Slyly.*] Well, and didn't you give yourself up?

Mr. X. No; for the following reasons: The man had no relations or other people for whom his life was necessary; he had lived out his vegetable existence; his place could be taken immediately by someone else who needed it much more; while on the other hand I was indispensable to my parents' well-being, to my own—perhaps to science. The result of the whole business had already cured me of my penchant to punch people in the neck, and I didn't feel inclined to sacrifice my own life and that of my parents to satisfy a sense of abstract justice.

Mr. Y. I see. So that's how you judge human values?

Mr. X. In the case in question, yes.

Mr. Y. But how about the consciousness of guilt, retribution?

Mr. X. I had no consciousness of guilt; I hadn't committed any crime. I'd taken and given punches as a boy. But what was responsible was my ignorance that a fatal result could be so easily produced upon an old person.

Mr. Y. Yes—but killing by chance-medley is punished by two years' hard labor all the same—just the same as —forgery.

Mr. X. I've thought about it enough, as you can think. And many a night I've dreamed I was in prison. I say, tell me, is it as bad as they make out to be under lock and key?

Mr. Y. Yes, my dear fellow. They first disfigure your appearance by cutting your hair, so that if you didn't look like a criminal before you do so afterward, and when you look at yourself in the glass you're convinced that you're a murderer.

Mr. X. That's a mask which can perhaps be taken off, but it's not such a bad idea.

Mr. Y. You joke about it, do you? And they reduce your food so that every day, nay, every hour, you feel yourself further away from life, and so much nearer to death. All the vital functions are depressed and you feel yourself dried up, and your soul, which ought to be cured and improved, is put upon starvation treatment, and thrust back a thousand years of civilization; you are only allowed to read books that have been written for the edification of our antediluvian ancestors; you can manage to hear what's never going to take place in heaven; but what takes place on this earth remains a sealed book; you are taken away from your environment, degraded from your class; put beneath those who are beneath you; you get visions of what life was like in the Age of Bronze, feel as though you were dressed in skins in a barbarous state—lived in a cave and drank out of a trough.

Mr. X. Quite so; but it's only reasonable that if a man's behaving as though this were the Age of Bronze he should live in the appropriate costume of the period.

Mr. Y. [*Frowns.*] You're making fun of me, you are. You carry on like a man in the Age of Stone, who is yet somehow allowed to live in an Age of Gold.

Mr. X. [*Interrogating sharply.*] What! What do you mean by that expression of yours—the Age of Gold?

Mr. Y. [*Slyly.*] Nothing at all.

Mr. X. You're lying, you are, because you haven't the pluck to say what you really meant.

Mr. Y. I haven't the pluck! You think that! I showed some pluck, I think, when I dared show myself in this neighborhood after I'd gone through what I'd gone through. But do you know the worst part of the suffering when a man's inside? Do you? It's just this, that the other men aren't there too.

Mr. X. What other men?

Mr. Y. The men who went scot-free.

Mr. X. Are you referring to me?

Mr. Y. Yes.

Mr. X. I've not committed any crime.

Mr. Y. Really, haven't you?

Mr. X. No; an accident isn't a crime.

Mr. Y. I see: it's an accident if you commit murder.

Mr. X. I haven't committed murder.

Mr. Y. Really—really! It's not murder, then, to strike another man dead?

Mr. X. No—not always. There's manslaughter—there's chance-medley—there's accidental homicide—and there's the distinction between malice aforethought or not. At all events, I'm quite afraid of you now—since you belong to the most dangerous category of humanity—the fools.

Mr. Y. Indeed! You imagine that I am a fool? Just listen. Would you like a proof that I'm very smart?

Mr. X. Let's hear it.

Mr. Y. Will you acknowledge that I reason with both shrewdness and logic when you've heard what I've got to say? You have had an accident which might have got you two years' hard labor; you've escaped scot-free from the stigma of hard labor, and here sits a man who has been the victim of a misfortune—a piece of unconscious suggestion—and suffered two years' hard labor. This

man can by great scientific services wipe out the stigma which he involuntarily brought upon himself, but to perform those services he must have money—a lot of money —and money at once.

Don't you think that the other man—the man who went unpunished—should readjust the balance of human life in the same way as if he were adjudged liable to pay compensation? Don't you think so?

Mr. X. [*Quietly.*] Yes.

Mr. Y. Now we understand one another. [*Pause.*] How much do you think fair?

Mr. X. Fair. The law provides that fifty kronors should be the minimum compensation, but as the dead man didn't leave any dependents your argument falls to the ground.

Mr. Y. No; you won't understand. Let me make it clearer. It's to me that you must make the compensation.

Mr. X. I've never heard before that a homicide should make compensation to a forger, and, besides, I haven't found anybody to accuse me.

Mr. Y. No? Well, here is someone.

Mr. X. Now we're beginning to see how the land lies. How much do you want to abet my homicide?

Mr. Y. Six thousand kronors.

Mr. X. That's too much. Where am I to get it from? [Mr. Y. *points to the chest.*] I won't. I won't be a thief.

Mr. Y. Don't try to bluff me. Are you going to tell me that you haven't been to that chest already?

Mr. X. [*As if to himself.*] To think that I could have made such a complete mistake! But that's the case with soft natures. You like soft natures, so you're apt to believe that they like you, and that's why I've always been on my guard against anyone I liked. And so you're absolutely convinced that I took the chest out of the ground?

Mr. Y. Yes, I'm certain.

Mr. X. And you'll inform against me if you don't get six thousand kronors.

Mr. Y. No mistake about it—you can't get out of it, and it's not worth while trying.

Mr. X. Do you think that I will give my father a thief for a son, my wife a thief for a husband, my children a thief for a father, my friends a thief for a colleague? Not if I know it. Now I will go to the police and give myself up.

Mr. Y. [*Springs up and collects his things.*] Wait a bit.

Mr. X. What for?

Mr. Y. [*Hesitating.*] I was only thinking—that it's not necessary any more—as it's not necessary for me to stay here—that I might go.

Mr. X. No, you don't—sit down in your place at the table where you were before—then we'll talk a bit first.

Mr. Y. [*Sits down after he has taken up a black coat.*] What, what's going to happen now?

Mr. X. [*Looks in the mirror at the back of* MR. Y.] Now it's as clear as possible.

Mr. Y. [*Nervously.*] What do you see so strange?

Mr. X. I see in the looking-glass that you are a thief —a simple, common or garden thief. A few minutes ago, when you sat there in your white shirt, I just noticed the books were out of order a bit in my bookcase, but I couldn't notice in what way, as I had to listen to you and observe you. But now that you've become antipathetic to me my eyes have grown sharper, and now that you've on your black coat, which affords a color foil in the red backs of the books, which there wasn't before when your red braces were showing, I see that you've been and read your forgery story out of Bernheim's treatise on suggestion, and have put the book back upside down. So you stole the story as well. Now that's why

I think that I'm right in drawing the deduction that you committed your crime because you needed either the necessities or luxuries of life.

Mr. Y. Out of necessity! If you only knew!

Mr. X. If you only knew in what necessity I have lived, and live still. But that's got nothing to do with it. But you've done your stretch, that's nearly certain, but it was in America, because it was American prison life that you described; and another thing is almost equally certain: that you haven't done your term here.

Mr. Y. How can you say that?

Mr. X. Wait till the inspector comes, then get to know. [Mr. Y. *gets up.*] Look here, now! The first time I mentioned the inspector, in connection with a thunderbolt, you wanted to clear out. Besides, when a man has served in prison he will never go to a windmill every day and look at it, or post himself behind a window-pane —in one word, you are both a punished and an unpunished criminal. And that's why you were so unusually difficult to get at. [*Pause.*]

Mr. Y. [*Absolutely cowed.*] May I go now?

Mr. X. Now you may go.

Mr. Y. [*Puts his things together.*] Are you angry with me?

Mr. X. Yes. Would you prefer it if I pitied you?

Mr. Y. [*Sulkily.*] Do you consider yourself better than I am?

Mr. X. I certainly do. I am better than you are. I am much smarter than you, and much more useful than you are to the general community.

Mr. Y. You are very deep, but not so deep as I am. I am in check myself, but all the same you'll be mate next move.

Mr. X. [*Fixes* Mr. Y.] Shall we have another round? What mischief are you up to now?

Mr. Y. That's my secret.

Mr. X. Let's have a look at you—you're thinking of writing an anonymous letter to my wife and telling her about this secret of mine.

Mr. Y. Yes; and you can't stop me doing it. Put me in jail? Why, you daren't; and so you've got to let me go; and when I'm gone I can do what I want to every day.

Mr. X. Oh, you devil! You've found my one weak point—do you want to compel me to become a murderer?

Mr. Y. You can't do that, you wretch!

Mr. X. You see, there's a difference between one man and another. And you know yourself that I can't do things like you do; that's where you have the pull over me. But just consider—supposing you make me treat you in the same way that I treated the coachman. [*Lifts up his hand to deliver a blow.*]

Mr. Y. [*Stares insolently at* MR. X.] You can't do it—you can't do it; just as you couldn't find your salvation in that chest.

Mr. X. You don't believe then that I took it out of the earth?

Mr. Y. You didn't have the pluck. Just as you didn't have the pluck to tell your wife that she'd married a murderer.

Mr. X. You're a different type of man to what I am —whether you're stronger or weaker I don't know— more criminal or not don't touch me. But there's no question about your being more of an ass; because you were an ass when you wrote in somebody else's name instead of begging, as I managed to do; you were an ass when you went and stole an idea out of my book. Couldn't you have known that I read my books? You were an ass when you thought that you were smarter than I was and that you could lure me into being a thief; you were a fool when you thought it would adjust the balance if there were two thieves in the world instead of one, and you were most foolish of all when you labored

under the delusion that I would go and build up my life's happiness without having first made the corner-stone safe. You go and write anonymous letters to my wife that her husband is a homicide?—she knew it when we were engaged! Now take yourself off!

Mr. Y. May I go?

Mr. X. You shall go now. At once. Your things will follow you. Clear out!

[*Curtain.*

SIMOON

CHARACTERS

BISKRA, an Arabian girl.
YOUSEF, her lover.
GUIMARD, a lieutenant in the Zouaves.

SIMOON

SCENE

In Algeria at the present time.

An Arabian marabout (cemetery) with a sarcophagus on the ground. Praying mats here and there; on the right a charnel-house. Door at the back with porch and curtains; window apertures in the wall at the back. Small sand hillocks here and there on the ground; an uprooted aloe; a palm-tree; a heap of esparto grass.

SCENE I

[BISKRA *enters with a burnous hood drawn down over her face, and a guitar on her back, throws herself down on a mat and then prays with arms crossed over her breast. The wind blows outside.*]

Biskra. Ia ilaha all allah.

Yousef. [*In haste.*] The Simoon comes. Where is the Frank?

Biskra. He will be here in a little space.

Yousef. Why dost thou not slay him at once?

Biskra. Nay, because he is going to do that himself. If I were to do it the whites would kill the whole of our tribe, for they know that I was the guide Ali—though they do not know that I am the maid Biskra.

Yousef. He is to do it himself? How is that to be?

Biskra. Dost not know the Simoon? Thou knowest that Simoon shrivels up the brains of the whites like dates, and makes them stricken with panic, so that life is

hateful to them and they fly out into the great unknown.

Yousef. I have heard such things, and in the last combat six Franks lifted their hands against themselves. For snow has fallen on the mountains and in half-an-hour all may be over. Biskra, canst thou hate?

Biskra. Thou askest if I can hate? My hate is boundless as the waste, burning as the sun, and stronger than my love. Every hour of joy they have stolen from me since they killed Ali has gathered together like poison in a viper's fangs, and what Simoon does not wreak that will I wreak myself.

Yousef. That is well spoken, Biskra, and thou shalt do as thou hast said. My hate has withered like grass in the autumn since my eyes have had sight of thee. Take strength from me and be the arrow from my bow.

Biskra. Embrace me, Yousef; embrace me.

Yousef. Not here in the holy presence; not now—later, afterward—when thou shalt have earned thy reward.

Biskra. Noble sheikh! Noble man!

Yousef. Yes; the maid that shall bear my child under her heart must show herself worthy of the honor.

Biskra. I—none other—shall bear the child of Yousef. I, Biskra, the despised one, the ill-favored one, but the strong one.

Yousef. So be it. Now I will go down and sleep by the fountain. Need I to teach thee the secret craft which thou didst learn from the great Marabout Siddi sheikh, and which thou didst practice in the market-place since thou wast a child?

Biskra. That need'st thou not do! I know all the secret craft that one needs to frighten the life out of a craven Frank; the cowards who crawl before their enemies and send leaden pellets before them. I know all—even to speaking with the belly. And what my craft fails to wreak, that shall the sun do, for the sun is on the side of Yousef and of Biskra.

Yousef. The sun is the Moslem's friend, but to-day is it passing great. Thou mayst get scorched, maid. Take first a drink of water, for I can see thy hands are parched. [*He lifts up a mat and stoops down to a bowl of water, which he hands to* BISKRA.]

Biskra. [*Lifts the bowl to her mouth.*] And my eyes begin to see red—my lungs to dry up. I hear—I hear—see thou, the sands run already through the roof, and there sings the string of the guitar. Simoon is here! But the Frank is not.

Yousef. Come down here, Biskra, and let the Frank kill himself.

Biskra. Hell first and death afterward. Dost thou think that I flinch? [*Pours out the water on a heap of sand.*] I shall water the sand, that my revenge may grow! And I shall parch my heart. Grow, hate! Burn, sun! Blow, wind!

Yousef. Hail to thee, mother of the son of Yousef, for thou shalt bear Yousef's son, the Avenger, even thou. [*The wind increases; the curtain in front of the door flaps, a red light illumines the room, but subsequently passes into gold.*]

Biskra. The Frank comes—and Simoon is here! Go!

Yousef. See me again in a half-hour. Here is your sand water. [*Points to a sandheap.*] Heaven itself will measure out the time of the infidel's hell.

SCENE II

BISKRA; GUIMARD, *pale and staggering, confused, speaks in a faint voice.*

Guimard. Simoon is here. What way do you think my men have gone?

Biskra. I guided your men to the left, toward the east.

Guimard. To the left toward—the east. Let me see.

Now I've got the east right, and the west. Put me in a chair and give me some water.

Biskra. [*Leads* GUIMARD *to the sand hillock, and puts him on the ground, with his head on the sand hillock.*] Art thou easy thus?

Guimard. [*Looks at her.*] I'm sitting a little crooked. Put something under my head.

Biskra. [*Piles up the sand hillock under his head.*] And now hast thou a cushion under thy head.

Guimard. Head? That's my feet. Isn't that my feet?

Biskra. Yea, surely.

Guimard. I thought so. Give me a stool, now, under my head.

Biskra. [*Drags along an aloe-tree and puts it under* GUIMARD'S *knees.*] There is a stool for thee.

Guimard. And water—water!

Biskra. [*Takes the empty bowl, fills it with sand and hands it to* GUIMARD.] Drink it while it is cold.

Guimard. [*Sips from the bowl.*] It is cold, but none the less it does not slake my thirst. I cannot drink. I abhor water, take it away.

Biskra. That's the dog that bit thee.

Guimard. What dog? I have never been bitten by any dog.

Biskra. Simoon has shrivelled up thy memory. Beware of the phantoms of Simoon. Thou rememberest the mad wind-hound that bit thee on thy last hunt but one in Bab-el-Oued.

Guimard. I was hunting in Bab-el-Oued! That is right. Was it a bran-colored one?

Biskra. A bitch! Yes, see now! And she bit thee in the calf. Dost thou not feel the wound smarting?

Guimard. [*Feels himself on his calf and pricks himself with the aloe.*] Yes, I feel it. Water! Water!

Biskra. [*Hands him the bowl of sand.*] Drink, drink!

Guimard. No, I cannot! Blessed Virgin, Mother of God! I am panic-stricken!

Biskra. Be not afraid! I will cure thee and drive out the devils with the power of my music. Listen.

Guimard. [*Shrieks.*] Ah! Ah! No music! I cannot bear it. And what good does it do me?

Biskra. Music tames the treacherous spirit of the serpent. Dost thou think it is not equal to a mad dog's bite? [*Singing with guitar.*] Biskra, Biskra, Biskra, Biskra. Simoon! Simoon!

Yousef. [*Underground.*] Simoon! Simoon!

Guimard. What is that you were singing? Ah!

Biskra. Have I been singing? Look here, thou, now I put a palm leaf in my mouth. [*Takes a palm leaf between her teeth. Song above.*] Biskra, Biskra, Biskra, Biskra, Biskra.

Yousef. [*Beneath the ground.*] Simoon, Simoon.

Guimard. What hellish nightmare is this?

Biskra. I am singing now. [BISKRA *and* YOUSEF *together.*] Biskra, Biskra, Biskra, Biskra, Biskra, Biskra. Simoon.

Guimard. [*Raises himself.*] What devil are you that sings with two voices? Are you a man or a woman? Or both in one?

Biskra. I am Ali the guide. Thou dost not know me again, for thy senses are wandering; but if thou wouldst save thyself from mad thoughts, and mad feelings, believe what I say and do what I bid.

Guimard. You need not bid me, for I find that all is as you say it is.

Biskra. Thou seest that it is so, thou idolater?

Guimard. Idolater?

Biskra. Yes. Take up the idol thou wearest on thy breast. [GUIMARD *takes up a medallion.*] Trample it under thy feet and call on God, the One, the Merciful, the Pitiful.

Guimard. [*Hesitating.*] St. Edward, my patron saint.

Biskra. Can he protect thee? Can he?

Guimard. No, he cannot! [*Sitting up.*] Yes, he can.

Biskra. Let us see then. [*Opens the doors, the curtains flap and the grass whistles.*]

Guimard. [*Puts his hand before his mouth.*] Close the door!

Biskra. Down with the idol!

Guimard. No, I cannot.

Biskra. See then. Simoon ruffles not a hair of my head, but thee, thou infidel, he kills. Down with the idol.

Guimard. [*Throws the medallion on the floor.*] Water, I am dying.

Biskra. Pray to the One, the Merciful, the Pitiful.

Guimard. What shall I ask?

Biskra. Say my words.

Guimard. Speak.

Biskra. "God is One, there is no other God but He the Merciful, the Pitiful."

Guimard. "God is One, there is no other God but He the Merciful, the Pitiful."

Biskra. Lie down on the floor. [GUIMARD *lies down involuntarily.*] What dost thou hear?

Guimard. I hear a fountain plash.

Biskra. See thou, God is One, and there is no one else but He the Merciful, the Pitiful! What dost thou see?

Guimard. I hear a fountain plash. I see a lamp shine, by a window with green blinds, in a white street.

Biskra. Who sits at the window?

Guimard. My wife, Elise!

Biskra. Who stands behind the curtains and puts his hands around her neck?

Guimard. That's my son, Georges.

Biskra. How old is thy son?

Guimard. Four years come St. Nicholas.

Biskra. And can he already stand behind curtains and hold the neck of another man's wife?

Guimard. He cannot—but it *is* he.

Biskra. Four years old with a fair mustache.

Guimard. A fair mustache, you say. Ah! that is Jules, my friend.

Biskra. Who stands behind the curtains and lays his hand around thy wife's neck?

Guimard. Ah! Devil!

Biskra. Dost thou see thy son?

Guimard. No, not any more.

Biskra. [*Imitates the ringing of bells with her guitar.*] What seest thou, now?

Guimard. I hear bells being rung, and I smell the odor of a dead body; it smells like rancid butter—ugh!

Biskra. Dost thou not hear the choir boys sing for the memory of a dead child?

Guimard. Just wait, I cannot hear it. [*Gloomily.*] But dost thou wish it, be it so; now I hear it.

Biskra. Dost thou see the wreaths on the coffin, which they carry in their midst?

Guimard. Yes.

Biskra. There is a violet ribbon, and this is printed in silver: "Farewell, my beloved Georges, thy father."

Guimard. Yes, that is it then. [*Cries.*] My Georges! Georges! My dear child! Elise, my wife, comfort me. Help me! [*Gropes around him.*] Where are you, dear? Elise? Have you gone away from me? Answer! Call out the name of thy loved one. [A VOICE *from the roof*: Jules! Jules!] Jules? My name is—— What is my name! My name is Charles! And she called Jules! Elise, dear wife, answer me, since your spirit is here. I know it, and you promised me never to love anyone else. [VOICES *laugh.*] Who is laughing?

Biskra. Elise, your wife.

Guimard. Kill me. I will not live any more. Life is as loathsome to me as sauerkraut in St. Doux. Do you know what St. Doux is, you? Lard! [*Spits in front of himself.*] I have no more saliva left. Water! Water! —otherwise I'll bite you. [*Full storm outside.*]

Biskra. [*Puts her finger to her lips and coughs.*] Now,

die, Frank! Write thy last will while there is time. Where is thy note-book?

Guimard. [Takes up a note-book and a pen.] What shall I write?

Biskra. A man thinks of his wife when he has got to die—and of his child.

Guimard. [*Writes.*] "Elise—I curse thee! Simoon—I die."

Biskra. And sign it thus, otherwise the will is worth nothing.

Guimard. How shall I sign it?

Biskra. Write: Ia ilaha all allah.

Guimard. [*Writes.*] That is written! May I die now?

Biskra. Now you may die like a cowardly soldier who has deserted his comrades, and thou art like to have a pretty funeral, with jackals to sing on thy corpse. [*Doing an "attack" on her guitar.*] Dost thou hear the drums going—to the attack—the infidels who have sun and Simoon with them advance—from an ambush. [*Beats on her guitar.*] Shots are fired along the whole line, the Franks are unable to load, the Arabs are spread out and shoot, the Franks fly.

Guimard. [*Raises himself.*] The Franks do not fly.

Biskra. [*Blows the "retreat" on a flute she has taken up.*] The Franks fly when the retreat is blown.

Guimard. They're retreating, they're retreating, and I am here. [*Pulls off his epaulettes.*] I am dead. [*Falls on the floor.*]

Biskra. Yes, thou art dead. Thou knowest not that thou hast been dead for a long time. [*Goes to the charnel-house, takes up a skull.*]

Guimard. Have I been dead? [*Feels his face.*]

Biskra. A long time! A long time! Look at thyself in the mirror! [*Shows the skull.*]

Guimard. Ah! Am I that?

Biskra. Look at your protruding cheeks. Seest thou

not how the vultures have eaten thine eyes? Dost thou not feel again the hole by your right grinder which you had taken out? Dost thou not see the hole in the chin where that pretty little imperial sprouted which thy Elise fancied so to caress? Dost thou not see the ears which thy little Georges was wont to kiss every morning over the breakfast-table? Dost thou see how the axe has taken away the hair at the neck, when the executioner was beheading the deserter?

[GUIMARD, *who has been sitting listening with horror, falls down dead.*]

Biskra. [*Who has been on her knees, gets up after she has examined his pulse. Sings.*] Simoon! Simoon! [*She opens the doors, the draperies flap, she puts her finger on her mouth, and falls on her back.*] Yousef!

SCENE III

Previous characters. YOUSEF *coming up from the cellar.*

Yousef. [*Examines* GUIMARD, *looks for* BISKRA.] Biskra! [*He sees* BISKRA, *lifts her up in his arms.*] Dost thou live?

Biskra. Is the Frank dead?

Yousef. If he is not, he shall be. Simoon! Simoon!

Biskra. Then I live. But give me water.

Yousef. [*Props her up against the wicket.*] Here. Now Yousef is thine.

Biskra. And Biskra shall be the mother of thy son. Yousef, great Yousef!

Yousef. Strong Biskra! Stronger than the Simoon.

[*Curtain.*

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